

THE INDYPENDENT

MASTERS OF WAR MEET THEIR MATCH

"...there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and international public opinion."

—The New York Times



BY JOSH BREITBART

Well over 10 million people participated in the global day of action against the war on February 15, over a million in the United States alone. The size of some of the protests — 2 million in Rome, 1 million in London, 250,000 in Melbourne — almost matched their geographic breadth. From Islamabad to McMurdo Station in Antarctica, from Buenos Aires to Singapore, seemingly disparate communities took to the streets together to prevent a war.

It remains to be seen if they have succeeded. Bush is still trying to wrangle a Security Council decision in favor of war. His new U.N. resolution is chilling, consisting of only one operative line: "The

Security Council decides that Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it by resolution 1441." British Prime Minister Tony Blair, meanwhile, has been placed over a political barrel. A Minister of Parliament in Blair's own party told the *UK Guardian*, "The government no longer speaks for its constituency. If Blair takes us into the war we will launch a movement in the Labour party to indict him."

Local communities in the U.S. are using their democratic institutions to register dissent. Los Angeles recently became the 107th city or county in the U.S. to pass an antiwar resolution, along with the state legislatures of Maine and Hawaii. The New York City Council this week unfortunately tabled an anti-war resolution until March.

Activists around the world, thankfully, are not counting on votes to stop the war, but have built on the success of Feb. 15 with a day of direct action on February 21. In Italy, 200 activists blockaded a train they believed was carrying U.S. military equipment. In Montreal, a group called Block The Empire shut down the U.S. consulate for several hours.

Within the United States, students walked out of class in Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles; activists locked down a military recruitment center in San Francisco; and two students were arrested while carrying out a "people's inspection" of Leo Burnett, the army's advertising firm.

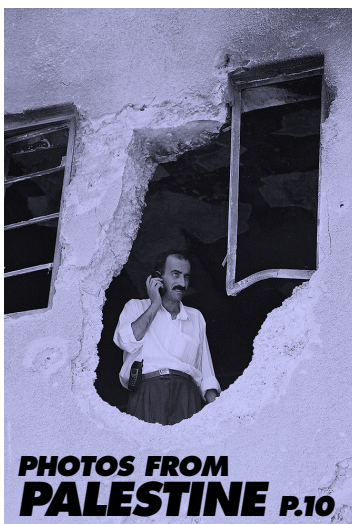
Even more than Feb. 15, these multination-

al and nearly simultaneous acts of protest occurred with no apparent coordination.

In Baghdad, "human shields" continue to arrive and now number more than 150. Coming from Japan, Turkey, Italy, the U.S., Canada and elsewhere, they will be deploying themselves at critical civilian locations, like water purification plants and electricity generators.

In the United States, momentum is building for a national moratorium to stop the war on March 5. According to Not In Our Name, which has issued the call, this means "No School, No Work, No Business as Usual."

March 5 is also the Christian holy day Ash Wednesday. Pope John Paul II has called on Catholics to fast on that day in the name of peace.



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"WHITE MEN CAN'T JUMP"

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What is the IMC?

With autonomous chapters in more than 100 cities throughout the world, the three-year-old Independent Media Center has become an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to illuminate and analyze issues impacting individuals, communities and eco-systems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate.

Unlike corporate media, we espouse open dialogue, and the importance of placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The *Independent* is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants, and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions. All reporting is done by NYC IMC volunteers unless otherwise noted.

What can I do to get involved?

The IMC has an open door. You can write for the *Independent*, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying entirely on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

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NEW YORK CITY

By ANNIE VENESKY

Protesters in New York City joined people in 602 cities around the world on February 15 to protest the proposed U.S. war on Iraq. While most of the world could legally march in opposition to the war, New York's half-a-million demonstrators were only permitted a stationary rally — a rally most of them were never allowed to attend.

The Permit Denial

What could have been an oddly timed series of events, or, as many anti-war advocates consider likely, a concerted effort by local and federal authorities to squelch New Yorkers' rights, began just a week before the protest.

On Feb. 8, Federal District Court Judge Barbara Jones denied protest organizers United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) a permit to march past the United Nations building. Despite the fact that the worldwide network had organized hundreds of well-planned marches in the past, she concluded, "The court finds that the heightened security concerns posed by an unorganized large-scale march threatens the City's interest in maintaining the public safety."

To many, the city's "heightened security concerns" stemmed from the Department of Homeland Security's upgrading of the terror threat to "Code Orange" the prior day, Feb. 7. But, according to a *Newsday* report, New York Police Department (NYPD) Deputy Commissioner Michael O'Looney confirmed "the Police Department since the fall of 2002 has been denying all permits for protest marches in Manhattan."

Adding to the confusion was a *Village Voice* report that the NYPD's chief negotiator, Mike Esposito, proposed an alternate march route in just prior to the permit denial. "Without explanation," the *Voice* notes, "the city took Esposito's plan off the table and rigidly insisted that no march would be allowed. [Mayor Bloomberg's Chief of Communications Bill] Cunningham said City Hall knew nothing about the Esposito proposal."

As for the Bush White House, it took an active role in the court case involving UFPJ's appeal of the march permit denial. Donna



PEACE: Protesters took to the Streets of New York City on Feb. 15, marching with the rest of the world against the war in Iraq. PHOTO: DEVIN ASCH

Lieberman of the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), which handled UFPJ's case, confirmed, "The Bush Administration... filed an affidavit noting the [city's] obligation to protect the U.N."

Though Lieberman says the administration "took no position in the case," it stretches credibility to claim the affidavit wasn't intended to sway the court.

Rumors and (More) Impediments

Thursday, Feb. 13, just two days before the event, more odd occurrences threatened to deter protesters. The New York City Independent Media Center received a phone call from someone claiming to be Leslie Cagan, a UFPJ co-chair, stating that the rally had been called off and that buses would not be allowed into Manhattan. The call and others like it turned out to be a hoax. The rumor was finally dispelled by Cagan, but not before a Philadelphia radio station broadcast the false information.

On the day of the protest, UFPJ's phone

lines went down in the morning. The lines came back up after Pacifica Radio affiliate WBAI announced the problem on the air. The phones went down again shortly thereafter and remained down until Sunday afternoon.

"The technician called the manner in which the phones went down 'odd' and said he had never seen another breakdown like it," said L.A. Kauffman of UFPJ. "People were brutally beaten and could not call us. It greatly hampered our ability to do support and... for people to fully express themselves."

Staff of nationally syndicated radio show *Democracy Now!* noted that two NYPD officers yanked out WBAI's phone lines after Pacifica began its coverage at 11 a.m. Resourceful technicians were able to get the lines back by noon.

Meanwhile, demonstrators trying to use the subway system ran into additional difficulty. Many subway lines, including the east-west L train didn't run the afternoon of the protest and the Metro North stopped running early, allegedly due to a police investigation. The

Dream became a reality on Feb. 15 as people around the

By DANIEL SCOTT

On February 15, an estimated 11 million people took to the streets in more than 600 cities around the world in a historic day of anti-war protest.

The "dream," penned by global justice activist Starhawk, forced its way into the waking world. "We wake up, stand up, speak out, not in the thousands but the millions, joining with millions around the world."

But how did the dream of millions visibly united against an unjust war become a reality? The answer lies in the history of the global justice (or anti-globalization) movement.

Although unprecedented in size, Feb. 15 was not the only day of global protest in recent years. Since the late 1990s, the global justice movement has been coordinating actions against the reverse-Robin Hood policies of neoliberal institutions, such as the World Bank, IMF and WTO. Neoliberalism, the underpinning of modern capitalism, is designed to maximize corporate profits by gutting environmental protection, labor organizing rights and spending on social programs.

The global justice movement began on January 1, 1994, when the North American

Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) took effect. In Mexico, the Zapatista National Liberation Army launched an armed rebellion that day, saying the trade pact would destroy the way of life and communities of all poor Mexicans, particularly the indigenous. Outgunned by the Mexican army, the Zapatistas transformed themselves into a civil movement that created a radically democratic form of self-government in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas.

In 1996 and 1997, the Zapatistas convened two gatherings, "For Humanity and Against Neoliberalism," attended by thousands of people from popular movements around the globe. After the second meeting a network called the Peoples Global Action Against "Free" Trade and the WTO (a.k.a. the PGA) formed and began planning a "Global Day of Action." Timed to coincide with the WTO's Second Ministerial Conference in Geneva in May 1998, the first Global Day of Action saw actions in 28 countries. The largest marches were seen in India (500,000), Brazil (50,000) and Geneva (10,000).

As a follow-up, PGA called for a "Global Day of Action against Financial Centers" to coincide with the meeting of the Group of Eight wealthiest nations (G-8) in June of

1999 in Cologne, Germany. Demonstrations occurred in 40 countries and anti-capitalist actions in London caused millions of dollars in property damage to corporations.

The PGA coordinated another Global Day of Action that year on November 30 to coincide with the WTO meeting in Seattle. As a result, protests shut down the WTO, stopping its free-trade agenda in its tracks, martial law was declared in Seattle, and Americans were introduced to the global fight against corporate domination.

Over the next two years, an emboldened citizenry, testing its strength and international reach, materialized wherever global economic and political meetings convened. Massive militant protests were coordinated in succession in Washington, DC, Melbourne, Prague, Nice, Quebec, Gothenburg, Barcelona, Salzburg and Genoa.

In January of 2001, the global justice movement organized the World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, Brazil. It was an evolution from protest politics to creating alternative and sustainable forms of globalization.

According to its Charter, The World Social Forum was intended for "groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the

UNCIVIL TO LIBERTIES



FIRST AVENUE: An army of peace marched on Feb. 15, despite the cops playing divide and conquer. PHOTO: DEVIN ASCH

Times Square station, the busiest in the system, was completely closed, says UFPP, reportedly for the same reason.

The Battle of the Barricades

Though those who reached the First Avenue rally point enjoyed a relatively peaceful and empowering day of protest, most demonstrators away from the cameras had a very different experience.

The NYPD deployed a street force of 8,000 for its "crowd control" strategy. Protesters west of First Avenue were divided and corralled into pens, creating a buffer zone between them and the rally area, starting at First Avenue and 51st Street.

Demonstrators were prevented from going west to east on many side streets, in violation of the deal the NYPD had reached with UFPP to keep side streets and sidewalks open. UFPP said the police also violated the agreement by closing off access to First and Second Avenue from the north.

As the day wore on, would-be rally goers became increasingly frustrated. Their attempts to make it to First Avenue were thwarted by miles of metal barricades. Those who reached Second, Third and Lexington Avenues found themselves penned in with nowhere to go as the formerly festive atmosphere became tense.

Some demonstrators broke through the barricades, but not without getting maced,

assaulted, and in some cases, arrested. One journalist was arrested for taking photos on Third Avenue. UFPP claims that at least two clearly identified medics and one legal observer were also arrested in the area as well as in Times Square.

As the crowd grew agitated, police used the opportunity to videotape the protesters. The city eventually employed a caravan of empty buses to break up crowds on Third Avenue, nearly hitting some as they fled to the sidewalks, according to eyewitness reports.

Detention, Distortion and Denial

When it was all over, UFPP and the NYCLU confirmed 311 arrests for the afternoon. For some arrestees, however, the ordeal wasn't over for some time.

At a Feb. 18 UFPP press conference, Debbie Hrbek of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) said many arrestees were held on buses outside of the Javits Center for up to eight hours without access to food, bathrooms or medical attention. Injured demonstrators smeared blood onto the buses' windows to show they

were being denied medical treatment.

Other arrestees were chained together for up to 90 minutes without gloves or other protection against the extreme cold. Arrestees were not allowed access to their lawyers for up to 12 hours, and were interrogated by police about their political affiliations.

Simone Levine of the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys said most arrestees were not arraigned for as much as 48 hours, twice the required limit.

The NYCLU's Lieberman found the NYPD's claim that inadequate staffing at the precincts caused the delays specious. Citing the number of police and barricades in the streets, she explained, "The police clearly had a sense of the numbers that would be at the demonstration."

In response, the police released a statement disputing the evidence from protesters and organizers.

"There were 294 arrests, mostly for disorderly conduct. Due to that volume there were some delays in processing people, but everyone was held on heated vehicles, fed, and allowed to use the restroom. Force was used by police as a last resort."

City Council Hearing

New York City Council member Bill Perkins, who attended the UFPP press conference, believes the NYPD infringed on demonstrators' legal rights. Perkins said the alleged police misconduct was "politically motivated and a direct response to the federal government cracking down on dissenting voices."

On Feb. 26, the City Council Committee on Governmental Operations, chaired by Perkins, began hearings on the protest and denial of the march permit. Neither the NYPD or City Hall sent representatives to the hearing. The police said the Council had not given a customary two weeks' notice to appear.

With the NYPD and administration officials absent, the council's main questions regarding the march permit went unanswered.

As did those of Committee member Margarita Lopez-Torres, who witnessed arrested protestors held in unheated vans and buses for hours outside of One Police Plaza. "The police should be here to tell us why," she said.

A further hearing will reportedly be scheduled in the near future, with police and administration officials in attendance.

According to Perkins staffer Cas Stolzmann, "If the Council is displeased with how the administration is interpreting the law... changes to the city code are possible; there's also the possibility of internal changes based on what is heard."

world hit the streets to stop the war

world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth."

Since the first WSF, two more have convened in Porto Alegre, and regional and thematic Social Forums have been held in Argentina, Italy, Ethiopia, India, Brazil, Palestine and New York City. In these forums, the networks of the global justice movement were developed and strengthened.

Momentum was building. In the summer of 2001, a plan emerged to move beyond a specific action in a single city to a week of protest in November at stock exchanges around the world. September 11 scuttled those plans and threw the global justice movement off-balance. Activists had to contend with the shock of thousands of dead, the "war on terror" abroad and a war on civil liberties at home. It quickly became evident, however, that the war was not about fighting terrorism, but extending the American empire.

When the European Social Forum met in Florence in November 2002, confronting empire was at the top of the agenda. It was here that the call was issued for a day of international protests on Feb. 15 against any

war on Iraq, whether under U.N. auspices or by the U.S. alone.

While many other large-scale, anti-war demonstrations have taken place around the world in the last year, the diversity, breadth and speed with which people organized themselves for Feb. 15 was greatly facilitated by the networks of the global justice movement. In only three months of organizing, the anti-war movement burst onto the world stage as more than 10 million people mobilized in visible opposition to the U.S. war drive.

In the wake of the global upsurge, even the flagship paper of the establishment, *The New York Times*, noted "...there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and international public opinion."

As more people join the protests against war, it's important to acknowledge the roots of the movement. The Feb. 15 protests were sparked by people who are not only against this impending war, but also against imperialism and corporate-led globalization. The focus of the anti-war movement is currently on Iraq. However, to have a lasting impact, anti-war activists must learn from the global justice movement by working to confront and dismantle the business of war.



I SWEAR: Lawyers for the protest organizers testify at a post-rally City Council hearing probing the police department's aggressive "crowd-control" strategies. PHOTO: FRED ASKEW

FROM THE FRONTLINES OF

First person accounts from the IMC newswire

For those who never made it to First Avenue, calls for peace took on an additional significance. After New York police corralled massive crowds into steel barricades in areas west of the main rally point. The following reports were compiled from the NYC Indymedia newswire.

I marched with Racial Justice 9-11/People of Color Contingency Against the War... It was the most diverse (race, gender and age) crowd I've ever seen in a peace march in NYC. They were the most self-disciplined people I've seen in my life. We marched for blocks and blocks on a bitterly cold day, suffering the police harassment, the humiliation of being penned in, the lack of public bathrooms, the lack of contact between the organizers and the marchers, but we didn't give up and go home.

SILVIA

The demonstration today in NYC was both inspirational and a source of deep frustration... The people raised their voices, walked in the street, but remained nonviolent. I can say this without qualification: we were non-violent. Enthusiastic chanting is not violence. It is free speech... I watched a 250+ lb. officer in riot gear ramming with all of his strength into a 110-pound woman in front of me. His name tag read "Meyers." He seemed to enjoy what he was doing, but the woman was shrieking in terror as she realized that there was no one to save or protect her...

JOE BUCK

For what it's worth a small group of about

two dozen of us were shoved onto the sidewalk at 45th Street... the police kept shoving us (they were riot cops with batons held horizontally across their chests) after we had stepped back on the sidewalk — a legal place to stand. We shoved back. They were two deep but we were at least four deep and we made them back up. Acting in unison — you can beat them.

I am proud of our little group. We were strangers but acted as one at that moment.

ANONYMOUS

After attending the main rally on 1st, I walked to the outskirts of Times Square to join the marchers. Then, for some unknown reason, the police assaulted a man holding

a huge puppet of Bush — that really cool green one that everyone liked (even CNN mentioned this puppet): they ripped the puppet off of him, threw him onto the pavement (slamming his head onto the ground), arrested him, and proceeded to tear this beautiful and complex puppet to pieces like swaggering grade-school bullies.

The crowds I joined were peaceful and well-controlled. Even though we were shouting and running through the streets at times, we moved together, looked out for each other, and could become quiet and still at a moment's notice. The police were unorganized, confused, violent, and unruly.

SEAN

I too saw the situation with buses on Third Avenue... One in particular that I saw came careening down Third Avenue at a very high rate of speed as the crowd in the streets was thinning out and looked like it was intentionally trying to hit people. One person I saw was able to jump out of the way at the last second before being hit. The bus also tried to ram into two people trying to cross the street. It was complete insanity.

ALI

I too was at the corner of 53rd and 2nd... After more pushing by cops on foot, lots of people were scared and crying out in pain and opposition. Then they started using the horses' bodies as weapons... three or four cops charged the crowd with their animals. We were terrified. There was nowhere for us to go to get away from the cops. The people on both sides of me were stepped on and as the horse directly in front of me reared I was kicked in the chest...

In my 12 years of horse ownership, I have never seen a worse example of horsemanship or animal abuse.

LILY



PEACE, BABY: Despite NYPD's attempts, protesters didn't easily get distracted from their message. PHOTO: FRED ASKEW



NATHAN BANNEY



F15

Testimony on the police abuse and ineptitude that marred a day of otherwise peaceful protest



PHOTO: BRAD KAYAL

Getting my fair share of abuse at the demonstration

BY DV BERNARD

As I set out to march in New York City on Saturday, February 15 I felt I had been through all this before. The first march I was compelled to go to preceded the first Gulf War. I was in college, an idealistic sophomore full of youthful defiance.

I remember my best friend and I declaring we would rather go to jail than serve in the war. During the march, which had 200 people at most, I walked along, chanting shyly amid Vietnam-era peaceniks and aspiring hippies from my own generation. Now, more than 12 years later, my idealism has faded somewhat. Yet the fact injustice still motivates me to take to the streets is a good sign.

On the subway ride into Manhattan (from Brooklyn), I read William E. Dubois' *The Souls of Black Folk*. It dawned on me what this protest was about. The country was heading in a catastrophic direction, and this might be our last chance to speak up against the impending attack on Iraq and its colonization.

Along with thousands of others, I emerged from the 42nd Street station and headed uptown, towards the United Nations. The enormous throng took up the sidewalk on both sides of the road. The telltale signs and placards were everywhere, decrying the idio-

cy of war. This was a day when people were marching in over 600 cities worldwide.

In Johannesburg and Barcelona, they were marching; in Chicago, Sydney and all the major capitals of Europe, they were marching.

In New York City, we moved up the sidewalks — some of us shivering from the cold, but most of us heartened by so many thousands joining in protest. As a veteran of New York City protests, I knew the routine. The police methodology was to control every facet of our movements: to make us take circuitous routes to the protest by strategically blocking off streets and then corralling everyone in pens like animals.

The rally stage was at 51st Street and First Avenue, but I had to walk up to 61st Street before being allowed to cross over to First Avenue. Others were forced to walk up to the 70s and 80s before they were allowed to cross. At each barricaded street, the police told us to keep walking.

Yet, the mood was upbeat. The city, citing security concerns, had refused to let us march. Yet we were marching. The north-bound column of protesters was so massive people were spilling into the streets. Tactics of crowd containment that worked on only a few thousand people were now ineffectual. Strangely enough, the atmosphere was like a carnival.

When we finally turned onto 61st Street, there was a huge inflatable globe being carried aloft. When it was punctured, people joked that the duct tape paranoid Americans had bought in the "Code Orange" panic the week before would be useful. As I passed by an alley, a band struck up a song of carnival.

People were flooding into the street now. The traffic coming off the 59th Street Bridge was hopelessly snarled in a sea of people. Some drivers grew enraged and honked their horns, but the vast majority seemed resigned as the throng moved past.

When we finally arrived at First Avenue, there was a huge bottleneck. I was corralled into a pen with a few thousand others. Here we stayed, listening to a panoply of speakers — Danny Glover, Desmond Tutu and Al Sharpton, Susan Sarandon and Angela Davis.

Other speakers espoused everything from the Palestinian cause to the rights of Asian gays and lesbians. Here, I reacquainted myself with a historical truth: All the truly evil acts in history, from slavery to Hitler's holocaust, have been presented in moral terms—as either being mandated by God or condoned by Him. None of history's great evil men had ever claimed to take his cue from the Devil.

We stood there freezing, yet invigorated.

I was 10 blocks from the bandstand, and as far as I could see behind me, there were protesters. People were smiling and laughing. When it finally ended, we all left with a feeling of peace and accomplishment.

When I got home and turned on the news, I was troubled. Not only was the city claiming the protest drew just 100,000 people, its focus (and the media's) was on skirmishes resulting from the police blocking people from First Avenue.

Tens of thousands of people had actually been kept away by the police. Friends who drove all the way from Virginia never made it past Second Avenue. Police, arbitrarily deciding the rally was big enough, refused to let them pass.

The police commissioner complained the city spent \$5 million in police overtime to control the protest — which was clearly inflammatory at a time when big cities were all facing budget crises.

This attempt to steer public opinion and to hide the essential truths of the rally was to me the greatest insult. The assumption has been that the government knows what is best for us. Now, one day after the protest, the freezing cold has given way to a blizzard.

As the streets are being snowed over, I can't help thinking that the voice of the people is receiving a similar snow job.

Senator Byrd: Reckless Administration May Reap Disastrous Consequences



BY U.S. SENATOR ROBERT BYRD

To contemplate war is to think about the most horrible of human experiences. On this February day, as this nation stands at the brink of battle, every American on some level must be contemplating the horrors of war.

Yet, this chamber is, for the most part, silent — ominously, dreadfully silent. There is no debate, no discussion, no attempt to lay out for the nation the pros and cons of this particular war. There is nothing...

And this is no small conflagration we contemplate. This is no simple attempt to defang a villain. No. This coming battle, if it materializes, represents a turning point in U.S. foreign policy and possibly a turning point in the recent history of the world.

This nation is about to embark upon the first test of a revolutionary doctrine applied in an extraordinary way at an unfortunate time. The doctrine of preemption — the idea that the United States or any other nation can legitimately attack a nation that is not imminently threatening but may be threatening in the future — is a radical new twist on the traditional idea of self-defense.

It appears to be in contravention of international law and the U.N. Charter. And it is being tested at a time of world-wide terrorism, making many countries around the globe wonder if they will soon be on our — or some other nation's — hit list...

This administration has turned the patient art of diplomacy into threats, labeling, and name-calling of the sort that reflects quite poorly on the intelligence and sensitivity of our leaders, and which will have consequences for years to come...

One can understand the anger and shock of any President after the savage attacks of September 11...

But to turn one's frustration and anger into the kind of extremely destabilizing and dangerous foreign policy debacle that the world is currently witnessing is inexcusable from any administration charged with the awesome power and responsibility of guiding the destiny of the greatest superpower on the planet.

Frankly many of the pronouncements made by this Administration are outrageous. There is no other word.

Yet this chamber is hauntingly silent. On what is possibly the eve of horrific infliction of death and destruction on the population of the nation of Iraq — a population, I might add, of which over 50% is under age 15 — this chamber is silent.

On what is possibly only days before we send thousands of our own citizens to face unimagined horrors of chemical and biological warfare — this chamber is silent. On the eve of what could possibly be a vicious terrorist attack in retaliation for our attack on Iraq, it is business as usual in the United States Senate...

To engage in war is always to pick a wild card. And war must always be a last resort, not a first choice. I truly must question the judgment of any president who can say that a massive unprovoked military attack on a nation which is over 50% children is "in the highest moral traditions of our country."

This war is not necessary at this time. Pressure appears to be having a good result in Iraq. Our mistake was to put ourselves in a corner so quickly. Our challenge is to now find a graceful way out of a box of our own making. Perhaps there is still a way if we allow more time.



12-year-old on war: What did us kids do to you?

BY CHARLOTTE ALDEBRON

February 15, 2003 - St. Mary's Church, Presque Isle, Maine Peace Rally Speech

When people think about bombing Iraq, they see a picture in their heads of Saddam Hussein in a military uniform, or maybe soldiers with big black mustaches carrying guns, or the mosaic of George Bush Sr. on the lobby floor of the Al-Rashid Hotel with the word "criminal." But guess what? More than half of Iraq's 24 million people are children under the age of 15. That's 12 million kids. Kids like me. Well, I'm almost 13, so some are a little older, and some a lot younger, some boys instead of girls, some with brown hair, not red. But kids who are pretty much like me just the same. So take a look at me — a good long look. Because I am what you should see in your head when you think about bombing Iraq. I am what you are going to destroy.

If I am lucky, I will be killed instantly, like the three hundred children murdered by your "smart" bombs in a Baghdad bomb shelter on February 16, 1991. The blast caused a fire so intense that it flash-burned outlines of those children and their mothers on the walls; you can still peel strips of blackened skin — souvenirs of your victory — from the stones.

But maybe I won't be lucky and I'll die slowly, like 14-year-old Ali Faisal, who right now is on the "death ward" of the Baghdad children's hospital. He has malignant lymphoma — cancer — caused by the depleted uranium in your Gulf War missiles. Or maybe I will die painfully and needlessly like 18-month-old Mustafa, whose vital organs are being devoured by sand fly parasites. I know it's hard to believe, but Mustafa could be totally cured with just \$25 worth of medicine, but there is none of this medicine because of your sanctions.

Or maybe I won't die at all but will live for years with the psychological damage that you can't see from the outside, like Salman Mohammed, who even now can't

forget the terror he lived through with his little sisters when you bombed Iraq in 1991. Salman's father made the whole family sleep in the same room so that they would all survive together, or die together. He still has nightmares about the air raid sirens.

Or maybe I will be orphaned like Ali, who was three when you killed his father in the Gulf War. Ali scraped at the dirt covering his father's grave every day for three years calling out to him, "It's all right Daddy, you can come out now, the men who put you here have gone away." Well, Ali, you're wrong. It looks like those men are coming back.

Or I maybe I will make it in one piece, like Luay Majed, who remembers that the Gulf War meant he didn't have to go to school and could stay up as late as he wanted. But today, with no education, he tries to live by selling newspapers on the street.

Imagine that these are your children — or nieces or nephews or neighbors. Imagine your son screaming from the agony of a severed limb, but you can't do anything to ease the pain or comfort him....

This is not an adventure movie or a fantasy or a

video game. This is reality for children in Iraq. Recently, an international group of researchers went to Iraq to find out how children there are being affected by the possibility of war. Half the children they talked to said they saw no point in living any more. Even really young kids knew about war and worried about it. One 5-year-old, Assem, described it as "guns and bombs and the air will be cold and hot and we will burn very much...."

Back in elementary school I was taught to solve problems with other kids not by hitting or name-calling, but by talking and using "I" messages. The idea of an "I" message was to make the other person understand how bad his or her actions made you feel, so that the person would sympathize with you and stop it. Now I am going to give you an "I" message. Only it's going to be a "We" message. "We" as in all the children in Iraq who are waiting helplessly for something bad to happen. "We" as in the children of the world who don't make any of the decisions but have to suffer all the consequences. "We" as in those whose voices are too small and too far away to be heard.

We feel scared when we don't know if we'll live another day.

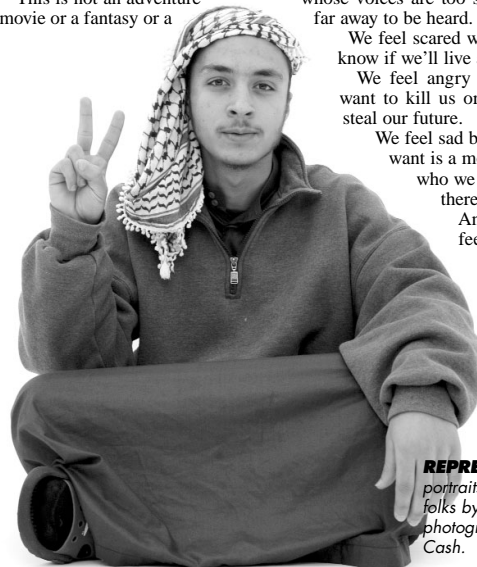
We feel angry when people want to kill us or injure us or steal our future.

We feel sad because all we want is a mom and a dad

who we know will be there the next day.

And, finally, we feel confused...

because we don't know what we did wrong.



REPRESENT: Studio portraits of anti-war folks by San Francisco photographer Julian Cash. WWW.JULIANCASH.COM

LOCAL NEWS...

Howard Zinn:

It's déjà vu all over again

Speaking in NYC, the left's venerable historian brings historical perspective to Bush's war drive

BY TONY PECINOVSKY

Howard Zinn, author of "A People's History of the United States," and professor emeritus of Political Science at Boston University, spoke to a packed New School University auditorium last month on the Bush Administration's push for war on Iraq.

Zinn, a long-time critic of United States domestic and foreign policy, asked the nearly 500 attendees to "step back from the immediate" and look at history.

"Without history, you don't have a reason to question" or to suspect a "pattern of deception and lies." But, one thing we find in history is that "Governments lie! And understanding that governments lie is a good starting point for any citizen."

Drawing parallels between the Mexican American War and the current crisis with Iraq, Zinn recalled then-President Polk's dubious petition against Mexico. "The cup of forbearance had been exhausted," Polk said shortly before the U.S. attack, in an attempt to convince Americans that there

was no alternative to war. Thousands were murdered in the subsequent invasion and occupation of what was to become the entire U.S. Southwest and California.

According to Zinn, the same situation is playing itself out today. Iraq poses no threat to the United States, and there are alternatives. Yet as far as Bush is concerned, "enough is enough! Saddam's gotta go!"

"Nothing is enough. Bush is determined to go to war," said Zinn. "The only problem is that huge numbers of people around the world are determined to stop him."

As a U.S. pilot during World War II, Zinn himself flew many missions over Europe, and knows first hand the death and destruction that war can wreak on civilian populations. He compared the death and destruction of ravished Europe to the U.S. bombing campaign against Afghanistan.

Zinn warned the audience to "be prepared. If we go to war, the bombing of Iraq will be the biggest barrage of destruction in history," undoubtedly taking the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians. "When civilians are killed it is never an accident. When you bomb — no matter how smart the bomb

— you inevitably kill large numbers of innocent people. If it is inevitable," he concluded, "it isn't an accident."

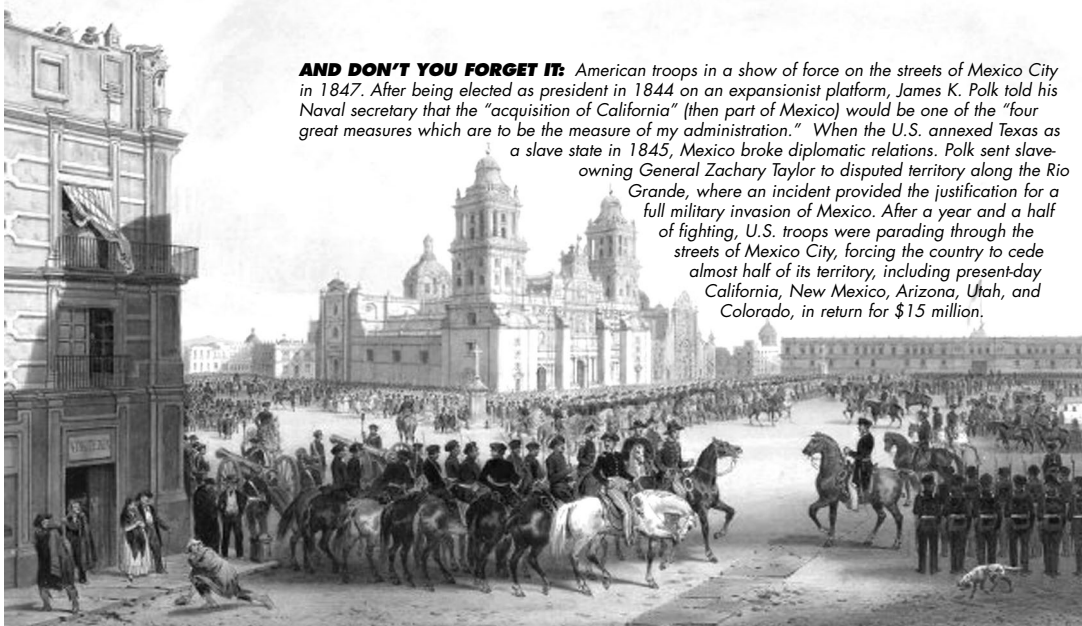
"War," Zinn added, "also involves killing our own." Following the Gulf War, 200,000 soldiers had their claims of mysterious ailments dismissed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Thousands continue to wonder if Gulf War syndrome is linked to the largely untested vaccines given to them during the war, or the depleted-uranium-coated ammunition used in Iraq. Soldiers still struggle with the uncertain long-term effects of this mysterious illness.

Not only do we "kill our own, but we also steal the wealth of the U.S. and feed it into a war machine," said Zinn. Domestically, the United States is in a crisis. Forty-four million Americans have no healthcare, governments are slashing education funding, and millions remain unemployed, as city and state budgets adjust to the billions being given to the war machine.

"We can learn a lot from history," Zinn said. "Our country has been taken over by men who have no concern for human life. It is our job to take it back."



AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT: American troops in a show of force on the streets of Mexico City in 1847. After being elected as president in 1844 on an expansionist platform, James K. Polk told his Naval secretary that the "acquisition of California" (then part of Mexico) would be one of the "four great measures which are to be the measure of my administration." When the U.S. annexed Texas as a slave state in 1845, Mexico broke diplomatic relations. Polk sent slave-owning General Zachary Taylor to disputed territory along the Rio Grande, where an incident provided the justification for a full military invasion of Mexico. After a year and a half of fighting, U.S. troops were parading through the streets of Mexico City, forcing the country to cede almost half of its territory, including present-day California, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado, in return for \$15 million.

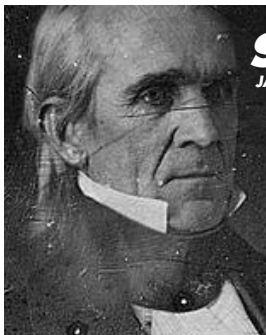


SELLING WAR

JAMES K. POLK'S "WAR ADDRESS" TO CONGRESS ON THE EVE OF THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR, 1846

"We have tried every effort at reconciliation. The cup of forbearance had been exhausted, even before the recent information from the frontier... After reiterated menaces, Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory, and shed American blood upon American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities are commenced, and that the two nations are now at war.

As war exists, and, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself, we are called upon by every consideration of duty and patriotism to vindicate with decision and honor, the rights, and the interests of our country..."



LOCAL BRIEFS

Spreading the word on the FTAA

Following in the footsteps of Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, El Salvador and other nations, New Yorkers are organizing Town Hall-style forums to discuss the potential impact of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) on democratic freedoms and the economies of the global North and South.

The FTAA is the expansion of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) to Central and South America and the Caribbean. The economic impact of NAFTA on the global south has been devastating, according to economic estimates, and contrary to the predictions of many of the agreements authors. In Mexico under NAFTA, the number of people living in severe poverty has grown by 4 million. In the US, NAFTA has already resulted in the loss of 260,000 jobs and increased trade deficits since taking effect in 1994.

The first New York City forum, known as a "Consulta" was held February 25th. More are scheduled for the upcoming year.

Students target greengrocers

Last Friday students from across the five boroughs hit the streets of New York under the banner of the Greengrocer Code of Conduct. These students, working with United Students Against Sweatshops and in alliance with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, as well as the New York State Attorney General's Office, went door to door to some of the 2,000 greengrocers across Manhattan to inform workers of their rights and owners of the consequences of not signing onto the code. Though signing on does little more than pledge the owners to obey already existing labor laws, it is a step towards the full unionization of greengrocer workers, as well as the policing of currently often ignored labor laws.

Cops nab Baghdad snapshot posters

On Feb. 13, artist Emilie Clark and writer Lytle Shaw were arrested for posting pictures of people from Baghdad in Soho. Both are members of the Baghdad Snapshot Action Crew, a New York City-based group of 75 artists and activists posting pictures of ordinary Iraqis around NYC in advance of Feb. 15's anti-war rally.

Clark and Shaw were arrested by three undercover policemen for taping a letter-sized flyer on a lamppost and charged with criminal misdemeanors. Clark, pregnant with her first son, spent seven hours in jail before her release. Shaw was released after five and a half. A court date has been set for March 13.

Both felt the arrests were an attempt to deter them from attending the Feb. 15 rally. "They kept saying how mace was going to be used on all the protesters, and then they said they had heard suicide bombers might attack the rally," Clark said.

"The snapshots were taken by a friend and fellow activist who recently returned from Baghdad working with the Iraq Peace Team. He saw Iraqis suffering and struggling but he also saw Iraqis dancing and laughing. We were moved because the people in the pictures remind us of our friends & family."

BY CHRIS FLEISHER

The Starbucks occupying the first floor of the Charles Schwab pagoda on the corner of Canal and Lafayette Streets is crowded with approximately three non-Asians to every Asian. Though many of these customers are undoubtedly tourists, they might represent the changing face of Chinatown residents.

As the Chinatown economy continues to struggle, gentrification has emerged as a concern among local leaders. Steven Yip, director of operations at the Chinese American Planning Council, is one of the concerned citizens.

"The threat of gentrification is a real thing," said Yip. "With the efforts to rebuild Chinatown, you're going to have a lot of conflicting priorities — and the outcome may not be in the best interests of the working poor."

The Asian American Federation of New York recently reported that for the last quarter of 2002, more than 90 percent of businesses surveyed anticipated an "inability to recover to the level of business prior to September 11."

Motivated in part by tax breaks and prime

real estate at bargain prices, many affluent investors are jumping in to Chinatown.

Edmund Li, managing director of Helmsley Spear Properties, for example, is currently building loft spaces on the periphery of Chinatown that will rent for as much as \$8,000 per month.

Li says the minimum qualification to rent a space would be an annual income of 40 times one month's rent.

"That's usually most landlords' requirement," he says.

The loft space, located at the corner of Essex and Canal Streets, is a sleek building with white stucco exterior and tall tinted windows. It sits between two grungy walk-ups, one of them built in 1907.

Since the summer of 2001, a total of 65 garment shops have closed, leaving warehouses available for developments similar to Li's. Though Li suggests that the influx of higher income residents would ultimately stimulate Chinatown's economy, some community leaders wonder: At what cost?

"What Chinatown in New York faces is the same danger that a lot of Chinatowns face around the country," said Robert Webber, spokesperson for Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE), a group that advocates

equal rights and access for Asian Americans. "With gentrification, with soaring rent... only a small core of Chinatown remains and the rest basically is perhaps becoming more of a tourist place than a community."

Though tourism is a major economic stimulus for Chinatown, Webber said a common misconception is that it is the main sector of the local economy. "It doesn't drive the jobs," he says. "The largest sectors are actually the industrial sector... and the professional service sector."

Unfortunately, these sectors of late have been experiencing slow-to-zero growth. According to Shao Chi Sim, director of research with the AAFE, many workers have been abandoning Chinatown for work in the casinos in Atlantic City and Connecticut.

"These are the type of jobs that don't require a lot of [English] language skills," said Chi Sim. "On top of that, they pay good benefits and good salaries."

With the slow exodus of Chinatown families to New Jersey, upstate New York and Connecticut, real estate brokers like Li are moving in. However, he contends that gentrification will be good for Chinatown.

"You'll see different stores coming into

town, a sudden surge of Duane Reades and national banks," Li said. "Canal Street will always be Canal Street... but rather than continue to be just a junky neighborhood with Mom and Pop stores, I think it will attract some bigger-town stores."

Others, like Robert Webber, recommend building the community from within in order to maintain the character of an area that primarily serves recent Chinese immigrants. In addition to encouraging businesses to hire local Chinatown residents, Webber says that Chinatown developers must do two things.

"First, Chinatown must do a good job of telling about its heritage, telling its story," Webber said. "Second, it needs to link up with other neighborhoods throughout New York City, especially lower Manhattan."

Though gentrification is primarily occurring at the periphery of Chinatown, local leaders are taking the issue seriously and maintain that the character of the enclave must be preserved. "One of the things about [the NYC] Chinatown is that it is an authentic, 24-7 community."

Webber maintained. "People live here, work here, shop here, and come here for religious and cultural reasons.

CHINATOWN AFTER 9/11

Brokers cash in as Chinatown economy falters and residents leave



CHANGING FACE OF CHINATOWN: Chain stores such as the Starbucks beneath Charles Schwab at Canal and Lafayette (left) are heading for Chinatown as local industry falters and residents look for jobs and housing outside the neighborhood. Lofts being developed beneath Helmsley-Spear building at Canal and Essex (right) will rent for as much as \$8,000 a month to tenants making over \$320,000 a year. PHOTOS BY EULAN

NATIONAL BRIEFS

Rumsfeld armed Korea

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld talks tough on North Korea's nuclear weapons program. But he took a different stand three years ago. In 2000, the corporation on whose board he sat scored a \$200 million contract with North Korea. Under a deal brokered by the Clinton administration, Swiss engineering giant ABB supplied equipment for two nuclear power stations. Two years earlier, Rumsfeld had attacked the deal, claiming the nuclear plants could be used to make "dirty bombs." Did Rumsfeld know about the contract? Wolfram Eberhardt, a spokesman for ABB, said Rumsfeld "was at nearly all the board meetings" during his 10 years with the company.

Big Brother watching immigrants

Big Brother's eyes will open a little wider this month when the State Department opens its database of more than 50 million foreign visa applicants to local police agencies and the FBI. The database includes applicants' photos, addresses, dates of birth and names of relatives. The *New York Times* reports that within a year the State Department database will be integrated with an FBI database and six others for local police departments, and will be instantly available to 100,000 police officials and intelligence agencies.

Legendary journalist calls Bush worst ever

After speaking at the Society of Professional Journalists awards banquet in January, legendary White House correspondent Helen Thomas, who has covered the last nine presidents, was asked by reporter John Bogert to autograph his program. As she did, he joked, "You sound worried."

"This is the worst president ever," she replied. Bush "is the worst president in all of American history."

This followed a speech where Thomas said Bush is riding a wave of fear — of looking unpatriotic, of asking questions, of fear in general. She added that we have chosen to promote democracy with bombs instead of largess, while Congress "defaults," Democrats cower and a president controls all three branches of government in the name of corporations and the religious right.

Speeding along missile defense

Last week the Bush administration proposed to exempt the Pentagon's controversial missile defense system from legally required operational testing. The request, buried in President Bush's 2004 budget seeks to rewrite an existing law that requires weapons testing for all new technologies. If passed, The administration intends to have a limited ground-based system operational by October of 2004.



ONCE YOU'RE A JET: Marines are the only branch of the armed forces prohibited from applying for discharge. PHOTO BY LEE GOUGH

When GIs say 'No!'

BY LEE GOUGH

"I cannot sign any petitions, pledges or post my name because I am not allowed to disagree with my Commander-In-Chief. I did not realize when I joined the military that I gave up my basic right to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly," wrote an anonymous Marine this month during an Internet anti-war forum.

The Marine continued: "I have been amazed at just how many military members have suddenly become a democrat [sic] recently. And we are very scared that this will be like Vietnam all over again. We are afraid that we will come home and be called baby killers. We want... the people to know that we did not ask for this job..."

The statement was signed, "the silenced few, the proud... the Marines."

It suggested resistance to aggressive adventurism in Iraq may be growing within the U.S. military. The Marine's words illustrated the dilemma that individuals who voluntarily serve in the military lose the right to publicly dissent from policies they oppose. They are even forced to participate in them.

Marines are currently banned from applying for discharges from military service (unless the applicant is gay or lesbian). To date, the Marines are the only branch of the military actually barred from applying for discharge.

Soldiers can be court-martialed for publicly opposing any military action. Consequently, many troops (and regular citizens concerned about the selective service or a possible draft) are desperately looking for more information on their rights.

Teresa Panepinto, coordinator of the GI Rights Hotline, says, "Since 9/11 our workload has quadrupled." Specifically, in 2001 there were over 17,000 calls to the hotline, which is a component of the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors,

based in Oakland and Philadelphia. In 2002 there were 21,218 calls. The number of hotline branches has doubled since 9/11."

Although there are no statistics for 2003, Panepinto notes "the number of people wanting selective service (draft) information has gone through the roof" and "the number of GIs seeking conscientious objector (CO) status has also vastly increased."

Moreover, "those who signed up for the military through the delayed enlistment/entry program, and have changed their mind and want out of the military, have made up another large portion of calls... not only has the number of calls gone up, but the nature has changed as well. We're seeing way more GIs interested in CO discharges, and we're getting contacted by way more reservists than pre-9/11."

"Most callers are between the ages of 18 to 30, who have just joined, or have been in under two years. That said, we are receiving many calls from older people who have been in the military a long time."

According to Panepinto, "Almost everyone who calls the hotline wants out," though the "reasons range from CO to those who have gone AWOL/UA to those with medical and/or psychological problems. Although there is nothing in military regulations that allows for COs to be treated poorly... that doesn't stop it from happening. COs are often ostracized by their peers. Many commanding officers tell COs that they will flat out refuse to read their application for discharge."

During the first Gulf War, peace groups estimated that 2,500 military men and women sought CO status. A subsequent General

Accounting Office investigation placed the number closer to 500. But Youth and Militarism Magazine, a publication of the American Friends Service Committee, observed that this number failed to include those who were jailed for refusing orders.

Also growing in number are veterans and military families who oppose what they see as an unjustified military attack on Iraq. Military Families Speak Out is one such group. It has made alliances with newer resistance organizations, such as September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, and veterans' groups, such as Gulf War Veterans against War on Iraq, Veterans for Common Sense, and Citizen Soldier, which challenges domestic militarism.

Two billion dollars a year are spent on recruiting youths into the armed forces. But as one 19-year-old Army infantryman's mother, Carol Korreck, wrote to the White House, enclosing a picture of her son, "Dear President Bush, This is my son Tim. You have been referring to him as 'military force.' I want you to be continually mindful of the fact that your 'military force' has a mother and two sisters who want you to value his life as much as we do."

Carol Korreck has yet to receive a reply.

for more information:

CCCC (GI Rights hotline)
www.objector.org (800)394-9544

Military Families Speak Out: www.mfsa.org

Veterans for Common Sense
www.veteransforcommonsense.org (202)543-6176

Citizen Soldier www.citizen-soldier.org (212)679-2250

Veterans Against the Iraq War
www.vaiw.org (212)866-1114



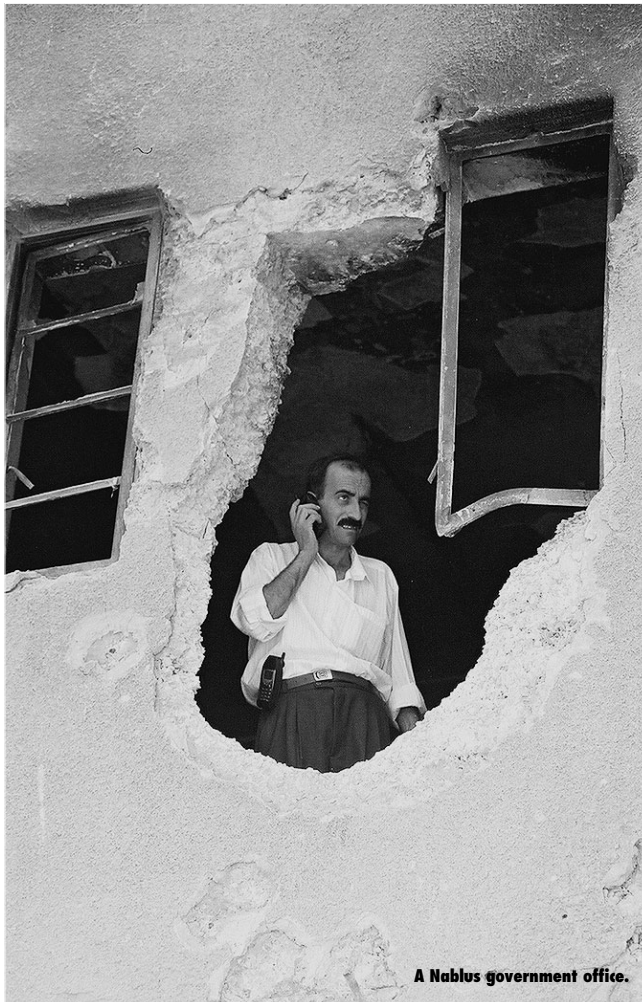


Palestinians, frustrated by their indefinite curfew, break out spontaneously. Bullet holes are visible on the gate.



"We will make a cry in each home and a funeral in each street" — Verse by a Palestinian poet.

PALESTINE: UNDER



A Nablus government office.



House in Gaza of Hamas member Salla Shehade, killed by an Israeli air strike this last summer. The attack killed an additional 15 people, including nine children.



One of the main streets in Gaza.

INDEFINITE SIEGE

Photo essay by Guille Valle

by Rania Awwad, ZNET

A U.S.-financed assessment of the overall malnutrition level among Palestinian children, released this month by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), found that one in five Palestinian children under the age of five now suffers from chronic or acute malnutrition. This astonishing statistic is on par with impoverished nations such as Chad and Nigeria, and actually surpasses rates of child malnutrition in Somalia and Bangladesh. Such figures, the report noted, are "considered an emergency by most humanitarians and public health officials." The report points to Israeli-imposed closures and sieges of major civilian centers as the direct and primary cause.

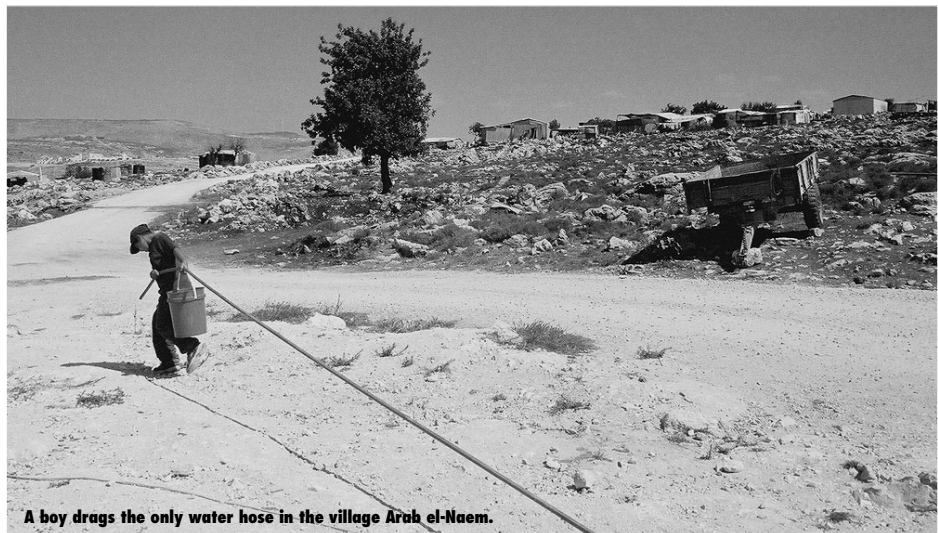
We typically think of famines as being caused by natural disasters (droughts, overgrazing) or by crises that result in the displacement of large populations from their lands (wars, ethnic strife). The situation in the occupied Palestinian Territories, however, is a startling aberration since it is clearly a man-made disaster intended to specifically target whole civilian populations. Most importantly, it can easily and immediately be reversed.

Today, Israeli military sieges are literally imprisoning families within their homes for days at a time. People cannot leave their homes to work, buy food, go to the doctor, or send their children to school. Military checkpoints and roadblocks are restricting commerce and the transport of food supplies. Workers cannot travel between Palestinian towns, and farmers and manufacturers are unable to deliver their goods to shops and markets. People have exhausted the money they can draw on from relatives and connections on the outside.

The USAID report also revealed that about one quarter of West Bank Palestinians have had to sell personal possessions to put food on the table. The World Bank recently determined that as many as 62 percent of Palestinian families are now living on less than two dollars a day. As a result of these obstacles, increasing numbers of families are skipping meals or reducing their food intake because eventually they run out of money and assets to sell.

But how can the slow starvation of a whole population be stopped when that very starvation is being altogether denied by the Israeli government and ignored by the U.S. Administration? Major General Amos Gilad, Israel's coordinator of government affairs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, was hardly ruffled by the USAID findings. In fact, he asserted that "hunger is when people have swollen bellies and fall over dead. There is no hunger yet."

The starvation of captive Palestinians is nothing less than the muffled ethnic cleansing of a whole people. As always, these matters should be of serious concern to U.S. citizens given that our diplomatic, military and financial support have long allowed Israel to pursue with impunity such policies which contradict our own cherished political values and commitment to human rights. It is time for us to speak up.



A boy drags the only water hose in the village Arab el-Naem.

Huerta: Shifts in courts threatens hard-fought workers rights

By DOLORES C. HUERTA



As a co-founder of the United Farm Workers with Cesar Chavez, I know what progress looks like. Injustice and the fight against it take many forms — from boycotts and marches to contract negotiations and legislation.

Over the years, we had to fight against brutal opponents, but the courts were often there to back us up. Where we moved forward, America's courts helped to establish important legal protections for all farm workers, all women, all Americans. Now a dangerous shift in the courts could destroy the worker's rights, women's rights and civil rights that our collective actions secured.

It is especially bitter for me that one of the most visible agents of the strategy to erase our legal victories is being called a great role model for Latinos. It is true that for Latinos to realize America's promise of equality and justice for all, we need to be represented in every sector of business and every branch of government. But it is also true that judges who would wipe out our

hard-fought legal victories — no matter where they were born or what color their skin — are not role models for our children. And they are not the kind of judges we want on the federal courts.

Miguel Estrada is a successful lawyer, and he has powerful friends who are trying to get him a lifetime job as a federal judge. Many of them talk about him being a future Supreme Court justice. Shouldn't we be proud of him?

I for one am not too proud of a man who is unconcerned about the discrimination that many Latinos live with every day. I am not especially proud of a man whose political friends — the ones fighting hardest to put him on the court — are also fighting to abolish affirmative action and to make it harder if not impossible for federal courts to protect the rights and safety of workers and women and anyone with little power and only the hope of the courts to protect their legal rights.

Just as we resist the injustice of racial profiling and the assumption that we are lesser individuals because of where we were born or the color of our skin, so too must we resist the urge to endorse a man on the basis of his ethnic background.

Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus met with Miguel Estrada and came away convinced that he would harm our community as a federal judge. The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) and the Puerto Rican Defense and Education Fund reviewed his record and came to the same conclusion.

Are these groups fighting Miguel Estrada because they are somehow anti-Hispanic? Are they saying that only people with certain political views are "true" Latinos? Of course not. They are saying that as a judge this man would do damage to the rights we have fought so hard to obtain, and that we cannot ignore that fact just because he is Latino. I think Cesar Chavez would be turning over in his grave if he knew that a candidate like this would be celebrated for supposedly representing the Hispanic community.

He would also be dismayed that any civil rights organization would stay silent or back such a candidate.

To my friends who think this is all about politicians fighting among themselves, I ask you to think what would have happened over the last 40 years if the federal courts were

fighting against workers' rights and women's rights and civil rights. And then think about how quickly that could become the world we are living in.

As MALDEF wrote in a detailed analysis, Estrada's record suggests that "he would not recognize the due process rights of Latinos," that he "would not fairly review Latino allegations of racial profiling by law enforcement," that he "would most likely always find that government affirmative action programs fail to meet" legal standards, and that he "could very well compromise the rights of Latino voters under the Voting Rights Act."

Miguel Estrada is only one of the people nominated by President Bush who could destroy much of what we have built if they become judges. The far right is fighting for them just as it is fighting for Estrada. We must fight back against Estrada and against all of them. If the only way to stop this is a filibuster in the Senate, I say, Que viva la filibuster!

Dolores C. Huerta is the co-founder of the United Farm Workers of America

Gilkes: Black history month helps build historical consciousness

By MICHELLE GILKES

Americans have recognized black history every year since 1926, first with a week and then a full month. Though African Americans have been part of this country since early colonial times, only in the 20th century have their contributions been acknowledged in mainstream American culture.

I say "their" because though I am black I am not African American; the legacy of Afro-American history is something I adopted when my family came to this country. My family moved to the States from England, where I was born, and to England from Trinidad and Tobago where, to my family, our history began.

Every year influential and magnificent black leaders, scholars and artists are commemorated so that the memory of their long-stifled achievements can live again in the minds of current generations. I do not look at black history month as lessons for white people who do not know that there have been contributions by blacks outside of Martin Luther King; I think of black

history month as a way of generating a historical memory for blacks who do not know they have a history.

In the consciousness of Western culture all history is remembered through a European perception where Europeans are the storytellers and heroes within the drama of human civilization. To study it is to learn that all the earth has been shaped, impacted, placed on the map and developed by whites. This slanted perspective has a poignantly deep and complicated impact on all people of African descent. It means you have no face in history. Try to imagine it: no presence on the landscape of civilization.

I have been shaped by such a consciousness, knowing more about European history, myth, art and culture. It is for people like myself that black history month becomes a necessity. Though the focus is on African Americans, I benefit from having a sense of the magnitude with which blacks have shaped this country, a respect I may not have had otherwise.

Not knowing where to begin writing about the topic of black history month,

I called a friend from the Dominican Republic to ask her what she thought of the commemoration. Her first response was to say that "they" should stop complaining about what has happened to "them," stop harping about the white man's abuses and lift themselves out of misery.

"It's not as easy as that," I remarked.

"I know, Michelle," she said. "But I think that if you are in the gutter it's because you want to be there. There are opportunities and programs that can help. My family came here with nothing and we are educated and take advantage of what is offered us in this country, and I have never experienced racism."

My first thought was that she has neither lived long enough nor traveled far enough if she has not experienced racism.

For my friend, a proud Dominican, the comfort of having a language, cultural heritage, family cohesiveness and property in a country she can call her own is what gives her the self-esteem to pursue her goals. What she does not understand or empathize with is the idea that a portion of

a group can be spiritually destroyed by the lack of such entitlements.

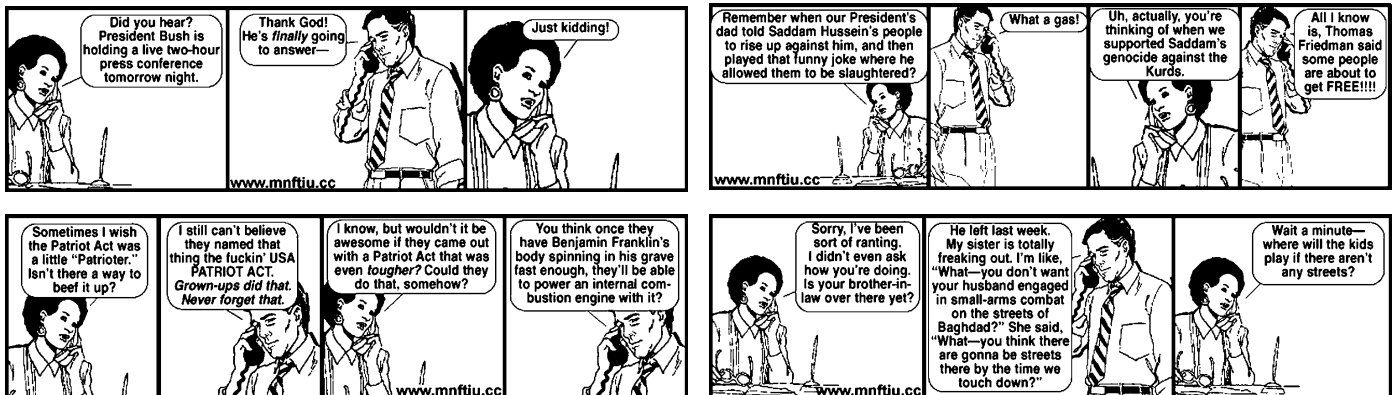
The American Indians have a saying: "If you take a circle and break it, you have a straight line with a beginning and an end." I can identify with such a break; unlike most West Indians I did not have the benefit of inheriting my family's culture. I was not raised among West Indians, did not eat the food, listen to the music or read the authors. The history had been white-washed, so to speak, such that I do not even feel its void.

How can one embody and pass on what one no longer knows? What happens to the individual when his or her history is wiped from collective memory? One becomes assimilated and one's ethnic identity dies.

I see a strong fight within African American culture to rectify the loss of heritage and in my opinion they are winning the fight. The recognition of one's ancestors is the acknowledgement of oneself in the annals of history. If that connection is broken and not repaired it is lost and lost forever.

GET YOUR WAR ON

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NATIONAL BRIEFS

Organic-labeling candidate

Ohio congressman Dennis Kucinich is noted as the anti-war candidate for the Democratic Presidential nomination. He has joined five other congressmen to sue President Bush and block a unilateral attack on Iraq.

But in Iowa, where farming and food production are key to the state's economy, he is receiving some of his strongest support from his struggle to require labeling of food that is genetically altered or contains genetically modified organisms and his advocacy of strict organic farming and organic food-labeling standards.

Farmers in Iowa feel that they could have an advocate in Kucinich, who portrays the fight over organic standards, food labeling and food safety as battle with farmers and consumers on one side and agribusiness on the other. Given that Iowa has national influence with its presidential primary caucuses — the first in the election cycle — and farmers in Iowa still have political muscle, food issues could get a national debate as the Democratic hopefuls in a crowded field jockey for position.



Tortilla Maker Tries to Flatten Union

BY TONY PECINOVSKY

After a three-year struggle for union representation at the Chicago-based Azteca Tortillas, one of the nation's largest and most successful tortilla producers, sixty-three employees won a National Labor Relations Board election. On April 12, 2002 they became members of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) Local 1159.

About a month later UE started contract negotiations with Azteca. When the mostly Latino workers expressed concerns about verbal abuse, rashes, burns and workplace injuries, Azteca showed its true colors.

Azteca's contract offer gutted seniority rights in new job openings, paid grievance procedures, eliminated clean-up time at the end of shifts and raised healthcare costs 700% — while only offering a 5-cent an hour raise.

Most of the Azteca workers made around \$9.50 an hour and could not afford to pay more in healthcare. A majority of the workers worked at the plant for over 12 years, while nearly a third worked there over 20 years. To gut seniority rights in new job openings would amount to employer favoritism.

Adding insult to injury, Azteca refused to translate the contract proposals or ensure

bilingual negotiations, even though most of the bargaining unit spoke Spanish as a first language.

In protest of the company's proposal, an informational picket was set up outside of the plant.

Then on September 30, members of Local 1159 were forced to strike. Azteca, which claims to be a pillar of the immigrant community, told all the workers they were fired for participating in the picket.

In response to this illegal activity, UE filed unfair labor practice charges against Azteca.

Azteca, which has an estimated yearly revenue of \$30-\$33 million, violated two Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations in the fall of 2002 and was cited for 12 violations of federal health & safety law, 10 of which were repeat violations, in 2000.

The National Labor Relations Board has issued a complaint against the company and has filled unfair labor practice charges. The charges include interrogation of employees, acts of illegal surveillance and threats of hiring permanent replacements.

National support for the Azteca workers has helped the UE members remain united and strong. Moral is high and not one striker has crossed the 24-hour-a-day, 7-days-a-week

picket line, despite the bitter Chicago winter.

According to UE's Rick Peduzzi, "The overall morale of strikers remains very high." Adding, that "Community support has also been exceptional."

To many, the Azteca campaign and UE's leadership exemplifies a new trend in organized labor. While the trade union movement has been more willing to work with community, religious and student organizations, until recently it hasn't focused many resources on organizing immigrants and Spanish-speaking people of color.

Many sections of organized labor have realized that focusing on immigrants' issues in the workplace is necessary to create and strengthen labor and community unity.

Taking a pro-active approach to building relationships with other organizations like Jobs with Justice, United Students Against Sweatshops, religious congregations, political leaders and community organizations has, in many recent struggles, paid off.

By working in coalitions and partnering up with small businesses in the community, UE has been able to exert much more pressure on Azteca, and is hitting Azteca CEO and President, Art Velasquez, where it hurts — his money bags.

Recently, members of Local 1159 declared two major victories. On Feb. 17, after months of requests by UE, Azteca CEO Art Velasquez agreed to accept federal mediation in the contract negotiations.

Though federal mediation provides no guarantee, the Azteca workers are hopeful that this development indicates that real progress can be made at the bargaining table.

And in February, Hyde Park Food Co-op in Chicago announced that they would support the boycott against Azteca. "The Hyde Park Food Co-op sent a very strong message to Art Velasquez that union busting will not be tolerated," said Josefina Bonilla, an Azteca worker.

On Feb. 4, Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez and Congresswomen Jan Schakowsky called on Azteca to negotiate fair union contract "as soon as possible."

While Azteca tortillas, shells and chips continue to be sold in grocery stores throughout Chicago and the country, including major grocery chains like Jewel and Dominicks, UE is certain the boycott is having an effect. They are also confident the Azteca workers, with community, student, religious and political support, will get a real contract.

For more info visit www.rankfile-ue.org

WHEN BUSH COMES TO SHOVE... WHERE DO YOU TURN FOR NEWS?

Naomi Klein says *The Independent* "mixes the spirit of direct action with a searing critique of corporate power." Drawing upon the global network of Indymedia Centers, we let people speak for themselves — from the streets of Baghdad to the jungles of Colombia, the shantytowns of South Africa to the villages of East Timor. We look at those resisting the Pentagon and Wall Street reign of terror, from the fight at home for housing, quality education and civil liberties to the broader struggle against corporate globalization. Don't miss an issue—subscribe today!

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A THREAT TO PEACE

A poster-sized color map of U.S. terrorist infrastructure. Whether you're a budding weapons inspector or just a trivia buff, *A Threat to Peace* can give you the scoop on nuclear manufacturing facilities, chemical and biochemical weapons facilities, weapons manufacturers, nuclear testing and launch sites, and more.



Belgium will Investigate Ariel Sharon

On Feb. 13, the Belgian Supreme Court ruled to allow investigation into the 1982 massacres of Palestinian civilians at the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps in Lebanon. Belgian law, using the principle of universal jurisdiction, allows for the prosecution of crimes against humanity even if they were committed outside of Belgium. The court decision could clear the way for the prosecution of Ariel Sharon, who was the defense minister at the time of the attacks, although he currently enjoys immunity as Prime Minister. An Israeli inquiry in 1983 said that Sharon bore "personal responsibility" for the attacks, in which more than 1,000 civilians were killed. A case against his codefendant, former Israeli army commander Amos Yaron, could go forward immediately. Israeli officials reacted angrily to the decision and suggested it could hamper relations between the two countries.

Venezuela's Chavez Wins?

President Hugo Chavez is emerging as the victor in the months-long opposition strike. The coalition of oil management and unions, the middle class, and mainstream press have thrown in the towel and agreed to a previous scheduled referendum on Chavez's presidency in the summer. Striking oil managers are in danger of being permanently replaced, as Chavez uses un-conciliatory rhetoric towards their ability to return to work. Chavez agreed on a referendum to be held in the summer before the strike, whereas an aim of the strike was to oust Chavez. Though Chavez survived the strike and is stronger there is a possibility that he could lose the referendum in the summer, to which the opposition has shifted its mobilizations. Perhaps the greatest challenge to Chavez is a revitalized oil industry that can fund his reforms. Oil production is still way below pre-strike levels.

U.S. Iraqi Evidence Not Holding Up

Yet again, one of the Bush administration's smoking guns has proven to be firing blanks. First there was the highly praised British intelligence report on Iraq — found to be lifted, spelling mistakes and all, from a decade-old graduate student paper. Now, Newsweek reports that when Iraq's most prominent defector, Lt. General Hussein Kamel, was debriefed by U.N. officials he asserted that Iraq had completely destroyed its weapons of mass destruction.

The White House has repeatedly cited Kamel's defection as evidence that Iraq hasn't disarmed and that inspections are ineffective. The debriefing was said to have been "hushed up" by U.N. inspectors and the CIA.

Kamel was Hussein's son-in-law and former head of Iraq's weapon programs. He fled Iraq in 1995 with boxes of secret papers documenting Iraq's pre-gulf war military build-up. In the interview with disarmament officials, Kamel states bluntly "all weapons — biological, chemical, missile, nuclear, were destroyed."

The Iraqi defector, killed by Saddam in 1996, has been referenced four times in recent *New York Times* opinion articles supporting war.

Pope Scolds Britain's Blair

Last week Pope John Paul II urged Tony Blair to avoid an Iraq war which the Pope said would be a "crime against humanity."

HIJACKING OF THE WSF



Hugo Chavez: He was one of many "Big Men" who dominated the World Social Forum.

BY NAOMI KLEIN
—REPRINTED FROM THE GUARDIAN

PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL, JAN 30, 2003—
The key word at this year's World Social Forum, which ended Tuesday in Porto Alegre, Brazil, was "big." Big attendance: more than 100,000 delegates in all! Big speeches: more than 15,000 crammed in to see Noam Chomsky! And most of all, big men. Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, the newly elected President of Brazil, came to the forum and addressed 75,000 adoring fans. Hugo Chavez, the controversial President of Venezuela, paid a "surprise" visit to announce that his embattled regime was part of the movement.

"The left in Latin America is being reborn," Mr. Chavez declared, as he pledged to vanquish his opponents at any cost. As evidence of this rebirth, he pointed to Lula's election in Brazil, Lucio Gutierrez's victory in Ecuador and Fidel Castro's tenacity in Cuba.

But wait a minute: How on earth did a gathering that was supposed to be a showcase for new grassroots movements become a celebration of men with a penchant for three-hour speeches about smashing the oligarchy?

Of course, the forum, in all its dizzying global diversity, was not only speeches, with huge crowds all facing the same direction. There were plenty of circles, with small groups of people facing each other. There were thousands of impromptu gatherings of activists excitedly swapping facts, tactics and analysis in their common struggles. But the big certainly put its mark on the event.

Two years ago, at the first World Social Forum, the key word was not "big" but "new": new ideas, new methods, new faces. Because if there was one thing that most delegates agreed on (and there wasn't much), it was that the left's traditional methods had failed.

This came from hard-won experience, experience that remains true even if some left-wing parties have been doing well in the polls recently. Many of the delegates at that first forum had spent their lives building labor parties, only to watch helplessly as those parties betrayed their roots once in power, throwing up their

hands and implementing the paint-by-numbers policies dictated by global markets. Other delegates came with scarred bodies and broken hearts after fighting their entire lives to free their countries from dictatorship or racial apartheid, only to see their liberated land hand its sovereignty to the International Monetary Fund for a loan.

Still others who attended that first forum were refugees from doctrinaire Communist parties who had finally faced the fact that the socialist "utopias" of Eastern Europe had turned into centralized, bureaucratic and authoritarian nightmares. And outnumbering all of these veteran activists was a new and energetic generation of young people who had never trusted politicians, and were finding their own political voice on the streets of Seattle, Prague

and Sao Paulo.

When this global rabble came together under the slogan "Another world is possible," it was clear to all but the most rigidly nostalgic that getting to this other world wouldn't be a matter of resuscitating the flawed models of the past, but imagining new movements.

The World Social Forum didn't produce a political blueprint — a good start — but there was a clear pattern to the alternatives that emerged. Politics had to be less about trusting well-meaning leaders, and more about empowering people to make their own decisions; democracy had to be less representative and more participatory. The ideas flying around included neighborhood councils, participatory budgets, stronger city governments, land reform and co-operative farming — a vision of politicized communities that could be networked internationally to resist further assaults from the IMF, the World Bank and World Trade Organization. For a left that had tended to look to centralized state solutions to solve almost every problem, this emphasis on decentralization and direct participation was a breakthrough.

At the first World Social Forum, Lula

was cheered, too: not as a heroic figure who vowed to take on the forces of the market and eradicate hunger, but as an innovator whose party was at the forefront of developing tools for impoverished people to meet their own needs. Sadly, those themes of deep participation and democratic empowerment were largely absent from Mr. da Silva's campaign for president. Instead, he told and retold a personal story about how voters could trust him because he came from poverty, and knew their pain. But standing up to the demands of the international financial community isn't about whether an individual politician is trustworthy; it's about the fact that, as Mr. da Silva is already proving, no person or party is strong enough on its own.

Right now, it looks as if Lula has only two choices: abandoning his election promises of wealth redistribution or trying to force them through and ending up in a Chavez-style civil war. But there is another option, one his own Workers Party has tried before, one that made Porto Alegre itself a beacon of a new kind of politics: more democracy. He could simply hand power back to the citizens who elected him, on key issues from payment of the foreign debt, to land reform, to membership in the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

There is a host of mechanisms that he could use: referendums, constituents' assemblies, networks of empowered local councils and assemblies. Choosing an alternative economic path would still spark fierce resistance, but his opponents would not have the luxury of being against Lula, as they are against Mr. Chavez, and would, instead, be forced to oppose the repeated and stated will of the majority — to be against democracy itself.

Perhaps the reason why participatory democracy is being usurped at the World Social Forum by the big men is that there isn't much glory in it. A victory at the ballot box isn't a blank check for five years, but the beginning of an unending process of returning power to that electorate time and time again.

For some, the hijacking of the forum is proof that the movements against corporate globalization are finally maturing and "getting serious." But is it really so mature, amidst the graveyard of failed, left political projects, to believe that change will come by casting your ballot for the latest charismatic leader, then crossing your fingers and hoping for the best? Get serious.



Lula da Silva: The President of Brazil spoke to a crowd of over 75,000 at the WSF.

REBELS REJECT ECOTOURIST RANCH

BY BENNETT BAUMER

Rancho Esmeralda lies nestled in a valley with rows of macadamia trees and picturesque cabins back-dropped by beautiful gardens. Its rustic ambiance boasts of bareback horses running freely through yellow dirt paths.

A beacon of leisure and tranquility in troubled Chiapas, Mexico, Rancho Esmeralda is the fruit of the life savings of Idaho natives Glenn Wersch and Ellen Jones. However, more than flying monkeys and apple-throwing trees are impeding travelers on their way to the ecotourist ranch in Chiapas, as Zapatista sympathizers say "Gringo, go home."

Within the past month members from autonomous indigenous communities have taken the offensive against encroachment on their lands. They held a group of river rafting North Americans for \$183 in "fines," and restricted traffic into the ranch. "They were fairly aggressive in hustling us off the river," Canadian tourist Andrew Walter said.

Furthermore, Wersch contends he was beaten up during a confrontation with locals from the nearby indigenous settlement of

Nuevo Jerusalem (New Jerusalem). Wersch and Jones also have charged that the Zapatista sympathizers are gearing up to occupy their lands.

Indigenous leaders have rejected the Americans' claims. They have said that their community's only concerns are raids from the military outpost across the highway from the tourist getaway and that the Americans will sell the land "por dinero."

The military barracks were built after the Zapatista rebellion started a couple of years ago. Locals from Nuevo Jerusalem say soldiers use the Rancho Esmeralda lands, which lie adjacent to the autonomous community, for transportation purposes.

For this reason, leaders from Nuevo Jerusalem erected a gate impeding entrance through a yellow dirt road to the ranch. The community says the ranch is the result of neo-liberal trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and Plan Puebla-Panama.



GO HOME: Zapatistas say the American-owned Rancho Esmeralda is used by Mexico's military and they want the Gringos to go home

AT U.N., IT LOOKS LIKE WAR

BY DONALD PANETH

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., Feb. 24, 2003 — A world drama of many dimensions is being enacted here, revolving around a second resolution on Iraq submitted today to the United Nations Security Council by the United States, the United Kingdom, and in a surprise move, by Spain.

There was another surprise: the resolution had only one operative paragraph, and it was worded in very spare terms: "The Security Council decides that Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it by resolution 1441." That was all. It didn't say anything about what the consequences of that failure would be, but if the resolution is adopted, everyone understands it would constitute the authority for a coalition to attack Iraq.

The French U.N. delegation came through with a minor surprise of its own — it handed a memorandum to the Security Council, stating that the Council "must step up its efforts to give a real chance to the peaceful settlement of the crisis." France proposed that the arms inspections continue for another 120 days, with reports to the Council every three weeks.

U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte told correspondents following closed-door consultations of the Council this afternoon that the inspectors had already had enough time to learn that Iraq was not cooperating in substance, and that the game had to end. For the next two weeks, a lot of words will be spent on the Iraqi crisis.

I've never seen anything like this current situation, and I've been covering the U.N. (or working for it as a member of the Secretariat) since Dec. 30, 1945. Right now, the future of the U.N. is on the table along with the tripartite resolution.

If the Council approves the resolution, the U.S. will be able to go to war with the backing of the U.N., a world body created at

the end of World War II to maintain international peace and security. If it rejects the resolution, the U.S. will apparently conclude that the U.N. is "irrelevant."

Does the U.S. have enough heft to push the resolution through the Council? It needs nine votes, and no veto. Throughout the U.N., that is the discussion going on. Some say the U.S. won't be able to get the needed votes; others suggest it will. Moreover, there is a great deal of discussion about whether France might veto the resolution. Russia and China, which have similarly objected to the use of armed force, are spoken of as abstaining. But nothing is certain on this question.

"I wouldn't count on a French veto," a highly placed U.N. source said.

The U.S. is lobbying to put together the votes needed for adoption. It is pressing Mexico and three African countries — Angola, Cameroon, and Guinea — to vote yes. With Bulgaria, Chile, and Pakistan, in the U.S.-U.K.-Spain corner, the number of affirmative votes would total 10. Syria and Germany are expected to cast negative votes.

There is a tentative timetable. On March 7, Hans Blix and Mohamed el-Baradei, the chief arms inspectors, are scheduled to present further in-person reports to the Council. After that, the Council would vote on the resolution, and it would be touch and go as to what happened next.

Meanwhile, the mood here at U.N. headquarters is feverish and apprehensive.

The French foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin, created a sensation and received prolonged applause on Feb. 14 when he declared eloquently before the Council: "In this temple of the United Nations, we are the guardians of an ideal, the guardians of a conscience. The onerous responsibility and immense honor we have must lead us to give priority to disarmament in peace."

President George W. Bush's response to the huge demonstrations for peace around the world on Feb. 15 was especially significant.

"Size of protest," Bush said, "it's like deciding, well, I'm going to decide policy based upon a focus group. The role of a leader is to decide policy based upon the security, in this case, the security of the people."

Those terms — focus group, leader, security — might be examined and defined anew, if events were not moving so fast. But they are moving quickly, and in that context, a lot is being lost.

Other important issues are being ignored or sidelined, including the authenticity of the material presented to the Council Feb. 5 by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Powell offered a compendium of what he called "facts, not assertions," "evidence, not conjecture," regarding Iraq's weaponry and its failure to comply with U.N. arms inspectors. He declared that Iraq had "failed the test," and "placed itself in danger of serious consequences."

However, Powell's presentation was questioned and criticized in a number of quarters. Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Feb. 10 that evidence of Iraq's weapons programs must be verified by inspectors on the ground. The key word was "verified."

De Villepin observed: "Powell reported alleged links between al-Qaeda and the regime in Baghdad. Given the present state of our research and intelligence, nothing allows us to establish such links."

The Security Council postponed action Feb. 19 on the issue of North Korea's suspected nuclear weapons program and on whether economic sanctions should be imposed. There were numerous other global problems scarcely mentioned in the press as it covered the imperative political dilemma of war or peace in Iraq.

War or peace — which is it to be?

WHERE TO GET YOUR INDY

EAST VILLAGE

May Day Books
155 First Ave.
(btwn. 9th and 10th)

KIM'S VIDEO

3rd Ave. & St. Marks Pl.

SOHO

Housing Works
126 Crosby St.

WEST VILLAGE

LGST Center
213 W. 13th St.

UNION SQUARE

Revolution Books
9 W. 19th St.

CHELSEA

Association Teyapac
251 W. 14th
at 8th Ave.

HELL'S KITCHEN

Second Wave
Laundroceter
55th & 9th Ave.

UPPER WEST SIDE

Labyrinth Books
112th btwn Broadway
& Amsterdam Ave.

KIM'S VIDEO

114th and Broadway

HARLEM

Riverside Church
490 Riverside Dr.
at 120th

Strictly Roots Restaurant
123rd St. &
Adam Clayton Powell Blvd.

Harlem Tenants Council
1 W. 125th,
Suite 209

STATEN ISLAND

Muddy Cup Coffee House
388 Van Duzen

Universal Unitarian
Church
312 Clinton St.

SOUTH BRONX

Freedom
Community Center
455 140th St.

WOODSIDE

Queens Pride House
6703 Woodside Ave.

WASHINGTON HEIGHTS

Monkey Business
187th St. and Ft.
Washington Ave.

BUSHWICK

Make the Road
by Walking
301 Grove St.

WILLIAMSBURG

Clovis Books
N. 4th St. and
Bedford Ave.

PARK SLOPE

Community Book
Store
7th and Carroll Sts.

COBBLE HILL

Tripoli Restaurant
Atlantic & Clinton

DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN

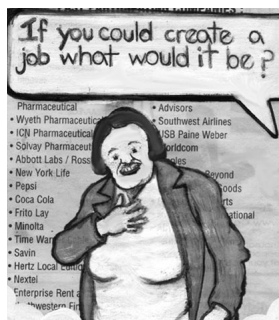
Soft Skull Press
7 Bond St. & State

FORT GREENE

Pratt Area
Community Council
201 DeKalb Ave

(This is only a select
list of our regular
drop-off locations.)

DE-BUGGING THE SILICON VALLEY DIVIDE



BY RAJ JAYADEV

Two years ago, the young temps of Silicon Valley, were invisible.

While the mainstream media obsessed over the fantasy of the 21-year-old who was three years from retirement, busy staking out dotcom property in cyberspace, and concerned only with being late for their weekly hip-hop yoga class, the reality for most folks working in Silicon Valley was starkly different.

Most young people worked at unglamorous, dead-end temp jobs. Most jobs in the new high-tech economy, it turns out, involved old-fashioned assembling, packaging and shipping — happening in the warehouses of the Ciscos, the Intels, and the HPs.

Work outside the tech industry was mainly in “support services” — such as making smoothies for the hip-hop yoga class. So the people who were really turning the engines of Silicon Valley were nowhere in the public’s perception.

But then a small group of us started meeting after work at a Vietnamese cafe in downtown San Jose, trying to out-do each other with stories of maniacal supervisors. When *Youth Outlook* (YO), a Bay Area monthly, put out a call for stories about the “digital divide,” we put our stories down on paper. We wrote about what we really wanted to say to the CEO, why people do drugs at work, and what it feels like to be so close to unattainable wealth.

When YO published our stories, we started handing out the magazine at Silicon Valley bus stops, light-rail stations and fast-food joints. We even chased the lunch truck all around the South Bay. People read our stories and for the first time saw their experiences reflected on paper, confirming that they weren’t alone.

But we were limited because our stories were not accessible to Spanish speakers. So we created a bilingual, bimonthly zine that gives voice to those who live and work at the epicenter of the high-tech revolution.

We called our organization and our zine De-Bug because we wanted our name to come from the language of the shop floor. In the computer industry, de-bug refers to the process of searching out and exposing the root cause of a malfunction.

For a year now De-Bug has been defining the experience of being young and temporary. If we have learned anything from the tech meltdown, it is that we are all “temporary” in this economy.

We hold open discussions every week to generate content for the zine. We keep our

content interesting and unpredictable by asking questions that we don’t know the answers to. When we did a story on drug use at work, we assumed that our two respondents — nicknamed “Getting High-Tech” and “Wired at Work” — did it to escape the monotony of work. They said, however, they did drugs at work because it made them more focused and interested in their tasks. Who knew?

We distribute our zine by hand at the places where our people are — at flea markets, laundromats and around lunch trucks. We want people to look forward to reading the next *De-Bug* while ordering their fried burrito.

When we approach people with our zine, we are usually met with surprise, because nobody expects to be offered a magazine while waiting for the bus or stepping out of a Carl’s Jr. restaurant.

Our next issue will be about young people becoming entrepreneurs amid a discouraging economy. We have people creating and selling their own CDs, and artists making T-shirts while trying to get hired as muralists in their spare time.

“If we have learned anything from the tech meltdown, it is that we are all ‘temporary’ in this economy.”

Initially, folks attributed the surge in youth entrepreneurship to a need to express themselves. But soon the dialogue shifted to how today’s jobs do not allow people to satisfy their goals, whether it’s home ownership or greater security or status. As Kefing Aperto-Berry, a *De-Bug* writer/rapper points out, “I don’t want to be renting my whole life, like my parents.”

Shana White, *De-Bug*’s 21-year-old Web designer, formerly tempted in the tech sector. She says, “My average pay for assembly was \$8 an hour, and for administration it was \$12. But whether I was on the line or behind the desk, I always wondered what I was going to do next because the jobs never lasted.”

The most common problems with temp work are low wages, lack of health benefits and job insecurity. But Edward Nieto, one of our pioneer zine writers, claims that his real problem with his temp job is “...my Mondays roll into my Tuesdays without me knowing it.” This observation makes a lot of heads nod in agreement in San Jose lunchrooms because it resonates more deeply than yet another comment about how badly the pay sucks.

There have been many attempts to organ-

ize low-wage workers in Silicon Valley using newsletters, flyers and newspapers. Mass organizing has failed so far in Silicon Valley, however.

But *De-Bug* is getting second looks by working people. We believe this is because *De-Bug* is sincere, and we are not trying to spin an agenda or political line in our stories. Our zine speaks to the total lives of the people, not just their work lives. The temp-based economy, with its short-term jobs and constant turnover, has spawned a generation of workers who do not identify with their work.

Because media creation encourages people to think for themselves, the zine lets us go places where traditional organizing does not. Traditionally, organizers have identified the key issues and the strategies to address them, while the workers simply hold the signs and chant in picket lines. Writing and art, however, allow people to develop analysis and strategies based on their experiences.

The challenge for labor-organizing in Silicon Valley is to meet people where their heads and hearts are, even if it’s not in the workplace.

More and more jobs are becoming contingent as employers shy away from permanent employees. Our potential movement, in which media creation plays a central role, is not only about a two-dollar raise, although that certainly is a part of it.

Through outlets like *De-Bug*, we hope to show young people at the low-wage end of the tech sector not so much the Silicon Valley fantasy but rather the more meaningful dream it inspired — the freedom to determine your own path.

Raj Jayadev, 27, is the coordinator of Silicon Valley *De-Bug*, a project of Pacific News Service. He was raised in San Jose.



DEBUG: Drawings and pairings
TOP TO BOTTOM: FERNANDO AMARO, RANDY DIAZ,
FERNANDO AMARO AND FERNANDO AMARO



FERNANDO AMARO

VIVE LA FRANCE!

BY EMILY REINHARDT

For most New Yorkers, Lafayette is probably the street where they pick up a Starbucks coffee or stock up on duct tape. The realization that it is named after a Frenchman who was George Washington’s aide-de-camp during the Revolutionary War would probably make most stop and say, “Quoi?”

Unless one is missing une oreille, it is impossible not to pick up on the anti-French sentiment our media and politicians are spewing lately. Recent covers of the *New York Post*, articles in *Newsweek*, Congressional Representatives calling for the labeling of Evian water...

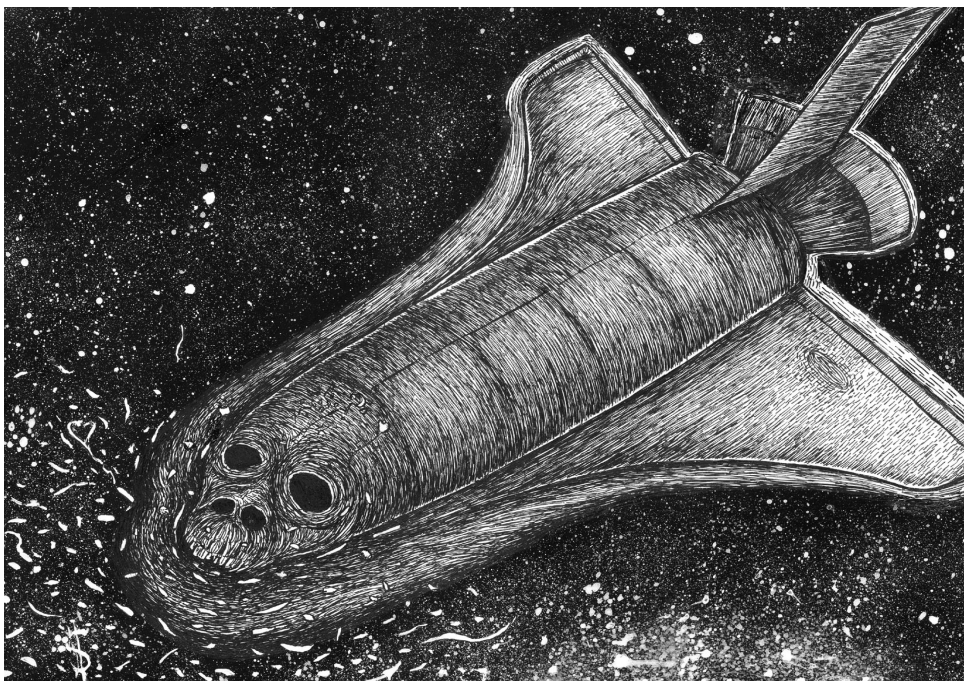
French-bashing has even gone to the general public’s head, with some restaurants renaming French fries “Freedom Fries.”

The fact that the United States was years late to the party for both world wars and that the French helped us considerably with that little terrorist operation we call the Revolutionary War is more food for thought than any “Freedom Fries.” But besides war, what the French have given us, as a country or culture, is immense. Some examples:

- That silly little statue at the mouth of the Hudson.... what is it called?...oh yes, the Statue of Liberty.
- Quiche.
- Flaubert, Proust, Colette, Moliere, Zola, La Fontaine, Voltaire, Balzac, Baudelaire, Hugo, Racine, Dumas, Verne, de Maupassant, Stendhal, Sartre, Duras, Genet and Ionesco.... just to name a handful of literature’s greats.
- Berets.

- The concept of “wine and cheese.”
- Louisiana Creole Culture: the mixing of French and other cultures to produce such things as Cajun cuisine, a language (Louisiana Creole), Mardi Gras, and the birth of jazz in New Orleans (which is named after Orleans in France).
- Innumerable words and phrases that we use everyday: “a la carte,” “a la mode,” “art deco,” “bon voyage,” “chic,” “coup d’état,” “critique,” “debutante,” “déjà vu,” “encore,” “faux,” “finale,” “genre,” “rendez-vous,” “repartee,” “RSVP,” “sans,” “souvenir,” “tete-a-tete.”

And this is just the short list of what we’ve been given by that “old Europe” country. Perhaps Rumsfeld and his French-bashing buddies don’t realize they’re being gauche by attacking the French. Or perhaps they are just enfants terribles.



THE CLOSING OF THE FINAL FRONTIER?

BY A.K. GUPTA

On the face of it, the Columbia disaster merited about as much attention as that can be spared between a bite of toast and a slug of coffee. It's like those multi-car pileups endemic to California's highways. Tsk. A nasty piece of work. But can we please get on to the weather and traffic report? We're going to be late for work.

What made the disaster compelling wasn't so much the deaths of seven people, but their extra ordinary mode of transport. There aren't millions of shuttles plying the skies. Just one at a time. Every couple of months.

Most people, upon hearing of Colombia's fiery re-entry, were unaware that it was even up above. After two decades and a total of 113 flights, shuttle travel had become banal. Part of that was due to the nature of the shuttle itself. After Neil Armstrong touched foot on the moon in 1969, human exploration took a giant leap backwards to low-earth orbit.

The mourning is not so much for the crew as for the future. Even many militant anti-war activists, who can cite chapter and verse as to how the shuttle and NASA are covers for Star Wars and the militarization of space, seemed downcast.

Space travel has seized the collective imagination for generations. On Earth, there are no more frontiers to explore, no more Wild West, Dark Continent or Lost City of Atlantis. It's the stars and planets that fuel our wonder.

For those who remember the first lunar landing, it seems like we were robbed. We were promised moon bases by 1999, journeys to Jupiter by 2001 and star-trekking warp drive soon to follow. Instead, we get geriatric senators and boy-band zillionaires orbiting no further away from Earth than the distance between Philadelphia and New York.

Space travel has lost its allure because no clear purpose has been articulated. NASA is not to blame entirely, despite its history of ineptitude. Rocket science lives up to the name — it's phenomenally difficult.

Approximately one in every 2 million commercial jet airliner flights ends in catastrophe. For the best-tested rockets, it's about one in every 50 launches, which is also the shuttle's failure rate.

Once safely up in space, there's a host of problems to sustaining human life for any lengthy period — bone loss, radiation, going bonkers from long-term confinement. And then, as so graphically demonstrated, space farers have to be returned safely to Earth.

NASA is great at self-promotion, but lacks vision. Even when it did have sky-high dreams, it was motivated by the Cold War. Propaganda was the chief purpose of the Apollo Program. Tens of billions of dollars were spent in an effort comparable with the Manhattan Project, and for what? So some flyboys could tool around in a lunar buggy, knock about golf balls and lug back moon rocks?

As for the science conducted in the shuttle, it's of dubious value. NASA hypes the myriad experiments it conducts in the micro-gravity environment. Critics snort, "Micro-gravity is of micro-importance." Shuttle crews don't see themselves as final-frontier explorers, but futuristic construction workers hauling in and heaving out satellites, or space movers ferrying materials to the international space boondoggle.

So why continue with manned space flight? Most aerospace companies make their money from building and launching satellites, which don't require astronauts. Some tout space tourism as the solution. It's estimated that millions of people are willing to pay \$5,000 or more for a brief space flight. Even if tourism generated billions a year, it would be a cosmic particle in the galaxy of money needed to develop reliable space travel. (Just developing a new commercial jetliner, comparatively, is a multibillion-dollar gamble.)

Others such as the Mars Society want to colonize the Red Planet. Even to send humans to plant the Stars and Stripes on Mars could cost \$1 trillion. And opponents are already crying, "Hands off Mars!" Another far-fetched

idea is asteroid mining. Even then, no one suggests humans, when robots would work 24/7 without complaint.

There is one other source of life support for a human presence — the Pentagon. Its goal of supreme global conquest is worthy of "Ming the Merciless." In one planning document, the Air Force envisions two squadrons of 15 space fighters each that can deliver a "payload" — bombs, direct energy weapons, space marines — anywhere in the world in under 30 minutes. (Military research was part of the doomed Columbia mission. Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon was testing a device that would enhance the ability of satellites to peer through dust and cloud cover).

Or maybe the dreams of tomorrow will look like the 1980s sci-fi flick, *Outland*: space colonies as company towns, expendable, drug-addicted miners, corrupt sheriffs and quacks "one shuttle flight away from a malpractice suit" patching the wounded.

That is not to say space exploration shouldn't continue. There are many positive roles it can play beyond economic exploitation or military conquest. Satellite imaging is irreplaceable for mapping desertification, deforestation, pollutants, the effects of global warming, etc. The Hubble Space Telescope has greatly expanded our knowledge of the universe. The Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence as well as the search for extra-solar planets may one day answer the burning question if we are alone in the universe. One of humanity's more laudable traits is our innate curiosity about the universe in which we live.

But with a choice between Darth Vader and Social Darwinism in futuristic drag, it's no wonder that most people have grown indifferent or even hostile to the space program. The future, it turns out, ain't what it used to be. But maybe we can look forward to the day when space squatters and lunarchists are fighting corporate solarization.



The CIA Goes to the Movies

BY MIKE WU

The CIA has never looked sexier. Top secret technology, biodegradable "bugs," ultra-sleek weapons, cutting-edge methods of dealing out death and deception — all are on display in *The Recruit*, the latest in a series of films and television projects depicting the intriguing world of the CIA.

Other recent films include *The Bourne Identity*, *Sum of All Fears*, *Spy Game*, *Bad Company*, *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, a film aimed at teens called *Agent Cody Banks*, and in the works, *The Good Shepherd*, a Leonardo DiCaprio vehicle about the history of the CIA. On the smaller screen there's *24*, *Alias*, *The Agency*, as well as a Discovery Channel documentary on the CIA. What most of these projects share is an image of the CIA that the agency is actively trying to perpetuate.

In the mid-1970s, a congressional committee chaired by Sen. Frank Church exposed the CIA's sordid history of organizing death squads, overthrowing sovereign governments, and using assassinations and chemical and biological warfare agents against its opponents. Hollywood responded with films such as



The Three Days of the Condor, *Missing*, *Salvador* and *JFK*, which were highly critical, if not outright damning, of the CIA. Given that the official CIA response to inquiries was "no comment," the imaginations of the American public were allowed to run rampant.

However, with the release of *Top Gun* in 1986, which glamorized naval aviators, the CIA realized its image could be improved using the Hollywood machine. In 1996 the CIA appointed Chase Brandon, a 25-year veteran of covert operations in Central and South America, as its official liaison to Hollywood. In his role as CIA "image enhancer," Brandon is to make sure that the CIA is portrayed "correctly" in films and television.

Brandon's input seems to range from getting the details right (which he did for *The Recruit*) to reading scripts and offering "suggestions." *Sum of All Fears*, *Bad Company*, *The Recruit*, *Alias* and *The Agency* all received Brandon's seal of approval. On the other hand, *Spy Game* and *The Bourne Identity*, which portray the CIA in an unflattering light, were scorned for being "unrealistic."

But realism doesn't seem to be a high priority for the projects Brandon endorses. The pilot episode of *The Agency* (which was given unprecedented access to shoot footage at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia) has the CIA foiling a plot to assassinate Fidel Castro. In fact, the agency tried for years to bump off Fidel, using methods that sound almost comical (including exploding cigars, a poison-filled ballpoint pen and a diving suit laced with a chronic skin disease). The original pilot episode, which was shot before September 11 and scheduled to air after it, was about a bombing orchestrated by terrorists with connections to Osama Bin Laden. (And still the CIA had no clue?)

The September 11 attacks gave the CIA a new purpose. Since it was originally conceived to help fight the Cold War, many have questioned the CIA's raison d'être now that the Cold War is over. Now the CIA is at the forefront in the war on terrorism despite the fact that it failed spectacularly to prevent the attacks. Even Colin Farrell's character in *The Recruit* acknowledges this. He calls the CIA a bunch of "fat white guys" who "fell asleep" when they were needed most.

The film goes on to make another assertion about the CIA. Colin Farrell's character, John Clayton, asks the omniscient CIA recruiter, played by Al Pacino, what he knows about his CIA-agent father's disappearance. Pacino replies twice, once in the beginning of the film and again at the revelatory climax, that Clayton's father never worked for the CIA, but rather "Shell Oil," suggesting that the two are one in the same. This film's been endorsed by the CIA, so it must be true, right?

TECHNOTOPIA and the Death of Nature

BY JAMES JOHN BELL

"We are on the edge of change comparable to the rise of human life on Earth," San Diego University professor of computer science Vernor Vinge warned in 1993.

Vinge is one of a number of scientists and futurists who predict that technological progress is driving the world toward a "Singularity" — a point at which technology and nature will join up. At this juncture, the world as we have known it will become extinct and new definitions of "life," "nature" and "human" will take hold. Vinge explains, "Within 30 years, we will have the technological means to create superhuman intelligence. Shortly after, the human era will end."

While leading proponents of technology have been aware of the Singularity concept for some time, there are concerns that, if the public understood the ramifications of the Singularity, they would be reluctant to accept new and untested technologies, such as genetically engineered foods, nano-technology and robotics.

Machine Evolution

A number of books on the coming Singularity are in the works. The idea of machine life gone awry is a Hollywood favorite.

This May, *Matrix Reloaded*, the sequel to the blockbuster film *The Matrix*, will delve into the philosophy and origins of Earth's machine-controlled future. In addition, Warner Brothers is releasing this summer the most expensive film of all time — a \$180 million sequel called *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*.

Cast members prepared themselves for their roles in the *Matrix*, by reading *Wired* editor Kevin Kelly's 1994 book *Out of Control: The Rise of Neo-biological Civilization*. Kelly's first page reads, "The realm of the born — all that is nature — and the realm of the made — all that is humanly constructed — are becoming one."

Central to the workings of the Singularity are a number of "laws" — such as Moore's Law. In 1965, Intel Corp. cofounder Gordon E. Moore noted that the number of transistors that could fit on a single computer chip had doubled every year for six years from the beginnings of integrated circuits in 1959. Moore predicted that the trend would continue, and it has — although the doubling rate was later adjusted to an 18-month cycle.

Today, millions of circuits are found on a single computer chip and technological "progress" is accelerating at an exponential rather than a linear growth rate. In 2005, IBM plans to introduce "Blue Gene," a computer that can perform one million-billion calculations-per-second — about 1/20th the power of the human brain.

According to Moore's Law, computer hardware will surpass human brainpower in the first decade of this century. Software that emulates the human mind — "artificial intelligence" — may take a few more decades to evolve.

Stewart Brand, in his book *The Clock of the Long Now*, discusses another law — Monsanto's Law — which states that the ability to identify and use genetic information doubles every 12 to 24 months. This exponential growth in biological knowledge is transforming agriculture, nutrition and healthcare in the emerging life-sciences industry.

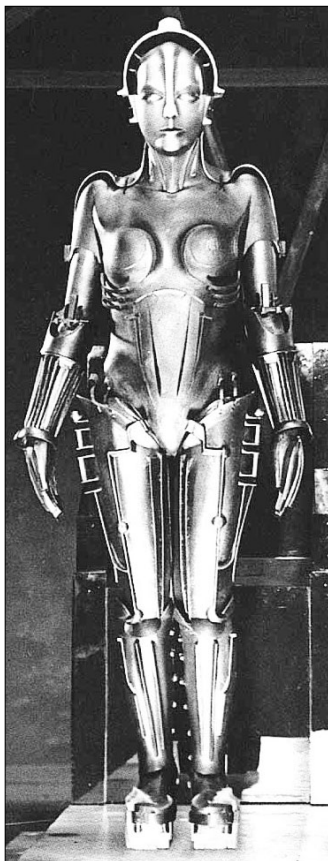
Reaching Infinity

Since the end of the last ice age about 11,000 years ago, the human population has grown exponentially. Dan Eder, a scientist at the Boeing Artificial Intelligence Center, notes that the asymptote, or point of near-infinite increase, in human population is "located in the year 2035 A.D." An infinite number of humans is, of course, impossible. Scientists predict our numbers will hover around 9 billion by mid-century.

Eder points out that the predicted rise of artificial intelligence coincides with the asymptote of human population growth. He speculates that artificial life could begin to multiply exponentially once biological life has met its limits.

Scientists are debating not so much if it will happen, but what discovery will set off a series of Earth-altering technologic

"...artificial life could begin to multiply exponentially once biological life has met its limits."



THE FUTURE DOESN'T NEED US: Developments in genetics, nanotechnology and robotics may dramatically alter life as we know it.

events. They suggest that advancements in the fields of nanotechnology or the discovery of artificial intelligence could usher in the Singularity.

Technologic Globalization

Most supporters of these theories and laws are in the tech sector and eagerly await the Singularity's arrival. The true believers call themselves "extropians," "post-humans" and "transhumanists" and are

actively organizing not just to bring the Singularity about, but to counter what they call "technophobes" and "neoluddites" — critics like Greenpeace, Earth First and the Rainforest Action Network.

The Progress Action Coalition (Pro-Act), formed in June 2001, fantasizes about "the dream of true artificial intelligence... adding a new richness to the human landscape never before known." Pro-Act, AgBioworld, Biotechnology Progress, Foresight Institute, the Progress Freedom Foundation and other groups that desire accelerated scientific progress acknowledge that the greatest threat to technologic progress comes not just from environmental groups, but from a small faction of the scientific community — where one voice stands out.

The Warning

In April 2000, Sun Microsystems' chief scientist and cofounder Bill Joy warned in the now-infamous cover story "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us," in *Wired* magazine, of the dangers posed by developments in genetics, nanotechnology and robotics (GNR).

Unless things change, Joy predicted, "We could be the last generation of humans." Joy said that "knowledge alone will enable mass destruction" and termed this phenomenon "knowledge-enabled mass destruction."

The Times of London compared Joy's statement with Einstein's 1939 letter to President Roosevelt, which warned of the dangers of the nuclear bomb.

The threat posed by GNR technologies is amplified by the fact that some of these new technologies have been designed to be able to "replicate" — i.e., they can build new versions of themselves. Nuclear bombs do not sprout more bombs and toxic spills do not grow more spills. If the new self-replicating GNR technologies are released into the environment, they could be nearly impossible to recall or control.

Globalization and Singularity

Joy understands that the greatest dangers we face ultimately stem from a world where global corporations dominate — a future where much of the world has no voice in how the world is run. The 21st century GNR technologies, he writes, "are being developed almost exclusively by corporate enterprises. We are aggressively pursuing the promises of these new technologies within the now-unchallenged system of

global capitalism and its manifold financial incentives and competitive pressures."

Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen contends that if chemists earlier in the last century had decided to use bromine instead of chlorine to produce commercial coolants (a mere quirk of chemistry), the ozone hole over Antarctica would have been far larger, would have lasted all year, and would have severely affected life on Earth. "Avoiding that was just luck," stated Crutzen.

It is very likely that scientists and global corporations will miss key developments (or, worse, actively avoid discussion of them). A whole generation of biologists has left the field for the biotech and nanotech labs. Biologist Craig Holdredge warns the science of "biology is losing its connection with nature."

Yet there is something missing from this discussion of the technological singularity. The true cost of technological progress and the Singularity will mean the unprecedented decline of the planet's inhabitants — an ever-increasing rate of global extinction.

Already, a majority of the world's biologists believe that a global "mass extinction" is underway.

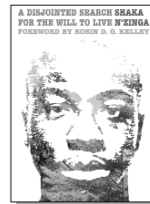
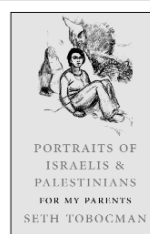
A 1998 Harris poll of the 5,000 members of the American Institute of Biological Sciences found 70 percent believed that what has been termed "The Sixth Extinction" has begun.

As a direct result of human activity (resource extraction, industrial agriculture, the introduction of non-native animals and population growth), up to one-fifth of all living species — mostly in the tropics — are expected to disappear within 30 years. "The speed at which species are being lost is much faster than any we've seen in the past — including those related to meteor collisions," University of Tennessee biodiversity expert Daniel Simberloff told *The Washington Post*.

At the same time that nature's ancient biological creation is on the decline, artificial laboratory-created biotech life forms genetically modified tomatoes, genetically engineered salmon, cloned sheep — are on the rise. Already more than 60 percent of food in U.S. grocery stores contain genetically engineered ingredients — and that percentage is rising.

Nature and technology are not just evolving: They are competing and combining with one another. Ultimately there could be only one winner.

For more information on the Singularity visit www.technologicalsingularity.info



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Revolución y Contrarrevolución en Venezuela

Así se llamó uno de los paneles del seminario La crisis del neoliberalismo realizado el 21-22 de febrero en Nueva York, patrocinado por NACLA, NYU y otras instituciones. Este fragmento del discurso de Juan Pablo Torres Delgado, cónsul de Venezuela en NY, presenta la opinión de un miembro de la Revolución Bolivariana. En próximas ediciones del periódico publicaremos la ponencia de Blanca Eekhout, Catia, TV Caracas, al igual que puntos de vista alternativos y críticos de la revolución bolivariana.

Para entender lo que está pasando en Venezuela, es necesario que revisemos algunos antecedentes a vuelo de pájaro. En los años 89 y 90, el mundo confrontaba una crisis ideológica con la caída del muro de Berlín y de la Unión Soviética. El pensamiento progresista estaba en reflujo... La paz estaba globalizada, había un mundo unipolar y una sola potencia... En América Latina, se discutía, entre otros temas, el rol de las fuerzas armadas, que no tenían una doctrina propia sino la del Pentágono. En Venezuela, una generación de militares jóvenes empezó a diseñar un modelo de país... A idear una doctrina latinoamericana. No eran marxista-leninistas, eran fundamentalmente nacionalistas, retomaban el pensamiento de Simón Bolívar, el líder, de Ezequiel Zamora, el guerrero, y de Simón Rodríguez, el maestro...

En febrero del 89 asume la presidencia de Venezuela por segunda vez Carlos Andrés Pérez, un populista, cuyo primer gobierno gozó de la bonanza petrolera. Eduardo Galeano describe muy bien el carácter de los venezolanos en esos años. Éramos la Saudita de América, mascábamos chicle, tomábamos whisky, importábamos carros, no éramos capaces de producir ni siquiera el arroz para alimentarnos. Todo gracias a la gran renta petrolera... Cuando Pérez asumió la pre-sidencia, se celebró una coronación imperial... Pero después de que se retiraran los dignatarios extranjeros, el presidente anunció un paquete de medidas económicas fondo monetaristas. Propuso apretarse los cinturones, y esto implicaba un alza en el precio de la gasolina. Ciento cincuenta toneladas de oro de la reserva del Banco Central fueron sacadas a Inglaterra para un supuesto control de calidad. Con ese oro se estaba pagando los compromisos con la Banca, se estaba hipotecando el futuro del país... Estábamos en presencia de un gobierno entregado al Fondo Monetario Internacional. Pagaríamos un costo muy alto todos los que no formábamos parte de las élites gobernantes ni de las clases dominantes. A raíz de una huelga de transporte, el 27 de febrero de 1989, estalla en Venezuela el "Sacudón", la insurrección popular que bajó de los cerros, de las barriadas populares, a saquear los comercios, a rebelarse contra aquel descaro gubernamental. Esta insurrección popular no tenía

líderes visibles, era un movimiento popular espontáneo... Al cabo de una semana de permanente toque de queda nocturno y de violación de los derechos humanos, según fuentes oficiales hubo 367 muertos pero las cifras de las organizaciones de derechos humanos señalan cerca de



Carlos Bernal

1200 muertos... El movimiento popular entró en reflujo porque la represión que se desató fue masiva...

En esa época, los jóvenes militares publicaron una propuesta cívico-militar que decía que el ejército bolivariano no podía transformar la sociedad sin el apoyo del movimiento popular organizado. El 4 de febrero del 92 protagonizaron una insurrección, que fue derrotada en el terreno táctico y militar, pero obtuvo un extraordinario éxito político... El movimiento popular tenía alguien en quien creer... Los militares insurgentes fueron a la cárcel. Desde el momento en que se empezaron a conocer sus comunicados, nos dimos cuenta de que estábamos en presencia de un movimiento militar nacionalista y progresista, que no eran los gorilas clásicos del Cono Sur... Rafael Caldera, que para ese entonces era, como lo decía Bertancurt, un muerto insepulto, es el único político tradicional que de alguna forma justificó el golpe. Eso le generó la simpatía popular, tanto es así que resulta electo presidente, con la promesa de poner en libertad a los militares. Pero éstos pasaron dos años y medio en la cárcel antes de ser liberados. Su libertad era un clamor popular... A partir de entonces se comenzó a articular un movimiento de carácter popular, con un liderazgo visible.

Existían dos países, un país virtual que era el país oficial y un país real que era el que estaba en las entrañas del tejido social. Los militares insurgentes pasaron cuatro

años construyendo una organización popular que finalmente se presentó a las elecciones. Después de discusiones internas sobre si la toma del poder era por la vía democrática o por la vía insurreccional, se impuso la tesis de que Chávez sea candidato... y todos conocemos lo que ha

pasado desde entonces. El temario de esta conferencia es revolución o contrarrevolución. Como es una historia reciente, es muy difícil catalogarla, sin embargo debemos decir que al comienzo el gobierno no se planteó la expropiación de los modos de producción capitalista... nunca estuvo en discusión el Tratado de Doble Tributación con los Estados Unidos (absolutamente beneficioso para las grandes corporaciones transnacionales) ni los onerosos pagos de la deuda externa. Venezuela ha pagado por servicios de deuda externa, tres veces su presupuesto en los últimos cinco años. Es una hemorragia, y se convirtió en un proceso privatizador... Porque pretendieron privatizarnos hasta el aire que respiramos. Pero eso no se logró gracias a la insurgencia y a la media-organización del movimiento popular. En principio el gobierno constitucional de Chávez se planteó la estructuración de un nuevo modelo de sociedad y para ello de una manera absolutamente legal se convocó a un proceso constituyente donde participaron todos los sectores de la sociedad. Se cambió el viejo modelo político y se creó un proyecto social que es la Constitución Bolivariana, una constitución hermosísima que contempla derechos como, por ejemplo lo más elemental, que es el debido proceso... Pero en el fondo no estábamos tocando los modos de producción, no se estaba proponiendo una transformación más profunda... La oligarquía veía a Chávez como un estorbo,

como un personaje incómodo pero que de alguna forma era domable, era tolerable, porque no había golpeado al gran capital... Hasta que se creó el paquete de leyes habilitantes que son 47 leyes, como la Ley de Pesca, la Ley de Tierras, la Ley del Estatuto de la Función Pública. Estas tres leyes, de las 47 que formaban el paquete le

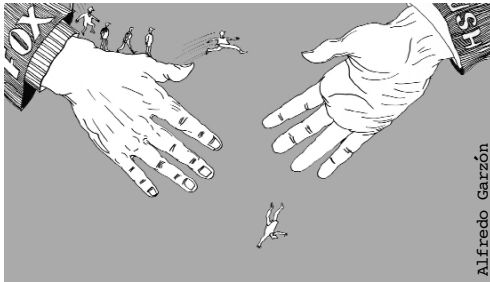
dan un carácter absolutamente revolucionario al proceso. Las clases dominantes se dieron cuenta en ese momento de que esta revolución iba en serio. Y empezó la campaña de los medios de comunicación. La Ley de Tierras establecía la expropiación de las tierras ociosas de los grandes terratenientes y la expropiación implicaba de alguna forma la indemnización, el pago. No iba mas allá, porque lo más revolucionario era la confiscación... La Ley de Pesca eliminó la pesca de arrastre de las grandes corporaciones y le dio un gran valor a la pesca artesanal. Esto golpeaba a las grandes corporaciones de la pesca. El estatuto de la Función Pública permitía desalojar a 16 000 empleados públicos que se encontraban enquistados de la república anterior, que tenían toda clase de privilegios y beneficios...

Para redondear me voy a permitir decirles que estamos frente a dos concepciones antagónicas, por un lado los que quieren que en Venezuela no pase nada, que no perturbemos la pesada digestión de los tranquilos oligarcas ni de los politiqueros, y los que tenemos el temperamento revolucionario de querer cambiar las cosas... No es ningún pecado tener ideas conservadoras, pero lo que sí es un pecado es decir que hay dirigentes populares que son iguales a los conservadores... Los oligarcas sindicales colaboraron con todas las corrupciones de los oligarcas empresariales, se enriquecieron con el mismo dinero, asistieron a las mismas juntas directivas, estuvieron de acuerdo en las mismas iniquidades... El rumbo de esta revolución, señores, no lo estamos decretando nosotros. Lo está acelerando la reacción oligárquica, los medios de comunicación que sirven a sus intereses y los factores externos... es más, no sabemos si es que la revolución nos persigue a nosotros o nosotros perseguimos a la revolución... En Venezuela hay un mundo para construir y tenemos confianza en la potencialidad de nuestro movimiento popular.

Reporte preparado por El Independiente IMC NYC.

Si quieres colaborar en EL INDEPENDIENTE (escribir artículos, corregir pruebas, traducir, etc.), envía un email a: imc-nyc-espanol@lists.indymedia.org o asiste a una de nuestras reuniones en IMC (34 E 29th St, piso 2) los martes a las 7.

EL INDEPENDIENTE



LA GUERRA INTERNA

Silvia Arana

Estados Unidos, el país más poderoso del mundo, trata de imponer su hegemonía económica a través de la globalización. En el orden militar, en nombre de la guerra contra el terrorismo, está desatando una violencia sin precedentes en la historia de la humanidad. Primero Afganistán, luego Irak, después... La guerra contra el terrorismo aterroriza al mundo entero. Pero hay otra guerra, de la que poco se habla, la guerra interna, la que se libra contra los trabajadores de este país, en particular contra los inmigrantes.

Dentro de las fronteras de Estados Unidos, el fantasma de la "deportación acosa a los inmigrantes, del Pacífico al Atlántico, del norte al sur del país. El miedo se palpa en los barrios, en los lugares de trabajo. Las redadas de la Migra en los aeropuertos, llamadas "Operación Tarmac" han causado la detención de más de 1000 trabajadores inmigrantes, muchos de los cuales fueron deportados. En la fábrica de helicópteros Sikorsky, en Connecticut, fueron detenidos 15 trabajadores inmigrantes. En Brooklyn, un taxista de la empresa Eastern, fue a completar los trámites de ciudadanía en las oficinas de Inmigración y nunca regresó a su hogar. Fue deportado a Quito, Ecuador, sin que le permitieran comunicarse con su familia, después de residir en Estados Unidos durante 19 años. Es uno más en la larga lista...

Antes de los atentados del 11 de septiembre del 2001, las organizaciones por los derechos de inmigrantes y refugiados, habían alcanzado consenso y apoyo en la campaña de amnistía para los indocumentados. Contaban con el apoyo de los gobiernos de México y de otros países. Sin embargo, después del 11 de septiembre, el gobierno de Bush cortó el diálogo sobre este tema. Y como si eso fuera poco, actualmente los inmigrantes legales, portadores de green card, también hemos perdido los derechos legales a la defensa; si somos acusados de un delito migratorio o de otro tipo, podemos ser detenidos y deportados de inmediato. No tenemos derecho a reclamar la presencia de un abogado. Es decir, que los inmigrantes, documentados o indocumentados, hemos perdido

nuestros derechos básicos, como el Habeas Corpus, en nombre de la "seguridad nacional".

Artemio Guerra, director del Proyecto de Participación Cívica de Nueva York, dice "los inmigrantes enfrentan una avalancha de obstáculos. Deben hacerle frente al accionar combinado de la Oficina de Inmigración y Naturalización (INS), Policía, Administración del Seguro Social y los patrones. Las ocupaciones de mayor riesgo por el control gubernamental son aquellos puestos de trabajo considerados "claves" para la seguridad nacional: aeropuertos, oficinas federales, contratistas del gobierno -desde fábricas de helicópteros hasta textiles. Si eres un inmigrante, te consideran una amenaza para la seguridad nacional. No importa tu estatus migratorio. Y las reglamentaciones serán más estrictas aún puesto que la Oficina de Inmigración está ahora bajo control del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional."

Estas leyes migratorias fueron en su mayoría sancionadas en 1996, durante el gobierno de Clinton, como parte del paquete de reformas Immigration Reform Act. Y le han venido como anillo al dedo a este gobierno republicano, que las está haciendo cumplir al pie de la letra, invirtiendo en ello un tremendo presupuesto.

Hasta ahora, no se han visto las ventajas de esta política migratoria en la llamada lucha contra el terrorismo. De los mil detenidos en la Operación Tarmac, según las autoridades federales, ninguno está acusado de actividades terroristas.

Sin embargo, es claro el efecto paralizante que ha tenido esta política migratoria en la actividad sindical. Con este clima, es difícil para un trabajador indocumentado obtener y mantener un puesto de trabajo, es más difícil aún organizar un sindicato y por lo tanto, disminuyen las posibilidades de mejora salarial. Y cuando los trabajadores inmigrantes, se ven obligados a aceptar salarios más bajos, también bajan los salarios del resto.

Hace unos meses un vocero de la Red Nacional por los Derechos de Inmigrantes y Refugiados (NNIR) se preguntaba: ¿Los inmigrantes tendrán que vivir en un estado policíaco? La respuesta del gobierno de Bush ha sido un SÍ rotundo.

UFW dice NO A LA GUERRA

Cesar Chávez, fundador del Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas (UFW) nos mostró un camino de paz y acción no violenta. Ese legado se vuelve indispensable hoy más que nunca. El Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas se ha sumado a esfuerzos nacionales y globales en contra de los planes del gobierno de Bush de lanzar una "guerra preventiva" contra Irak. El presidente Bush no ha ofrecido evidencias convincentes al pueblo estadounidense de que la guerra sea necesaria, que Irak represente una amenaza inminente para este país. El uso de la fuerza militar requeriría que miles de jóvenes, muchos de hispanos, afroamericanos y de otras minorías, vayan a la guerra. Sin embargo la guerra contra Irak significaría un daño a para la democracia a nivel interno.

Los expertos de este gobierno estiman que los costos de dicha guerra rondarían los 200 mil millones de dólares, requiriendo reducciones del gasto público en áreas como nuevos empleos, salud pública, servicio social (welfare), el ambiente y otros programas gubernamentales fundamentales. Los

oficiales de la Casa Blanca dicen que son necesarias reducciones para colocar el presupuesto federal "en pie de guerra". Poco o nada del presupuesto nacional estará disponible para auxiliar a los gobiernos estatales de California, Arizona, Texas y Washington que pronto podrían eliminar los programas de salud y welfare para los residentes pobres y las minorías, incluyendo los trabajadores agrícolas.

El aumento del gasto militar junto con la reducción de los presupuestos para servicios causará más desasosiego a millones de familias trabajadoras empobrecidas, entre las que se encuentran los trabajadores agrícolas que están entre los más pobres y explotados de Estados Unidos. Los últimos datos del departamento de trabajo muestran que el 90 % de los trabajadores agrícolas de California ganan menos de diez mil dólares por año, y no tienen cobertura de salud.

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Traducción de El Independiente, IMC-NYC

Trabajadores agrícolas fronterizos

La fuerza laboral agrícola nacional es de unos 2.5 millones de personas. El promedio de educación del trabajador agrícola es de 8 años o menos de escuela. La mayoría de los trabajadores agrícolas son jóvenes, casados y nacidos en el extranjero, y más de dos terceros son de origen hispano.

La fuerza laboral agrícola para la región de El Paso-Juárez se estima en 12,000 personas. La mayoría son inmigrantes legales de México y el resto son ciudadanos estadounidenses de origen mexicano. Estos trabajadores laboran principalmente en los campos agrícolas del sur de Nuevo México y en las zonas agrícolas aledañas a El Paso.

Cuando menos una cuarta parte son mujeres y es común encontrar a niños menores de edad laborando en los campos.

El ingreso anual promedio es de unos \$6,000, menos de la tercera parte del nivel de pobreza (\$18,770 para una familia promedio de 5)

Sólo unos cuantos contratistas de mano de

obra agrícola proporcionan agua para beber o servicios sanitarios en los campos. Los contratistas de mano de obra agrícola y los agricultores condicionan el empleo a que los trabajadores consuman la comida y las bebidas alcohólicas que expenden en los campos.

Como resultado a la reforma a la Ley de Asistencia Pública y a las leyes de inmigración, la mayoría de los trabajadores agrícolas ya no califican para recibir asistencia médica o de ayuda de alimentos.

Casi la mitad de la fuerza laboral agrícola de la región carece de un lugar permanente para vivir. El promedio de vida de los trabajadores agrícolas en Estados Unidos es de 49 años.

La Agencia de Protección del Ambiente (EPA) estima que cada año ocurren más de 300 mil enfermedades relacionadas a la exposición a pesticidas.

Datos tomados de www.farmworkers.org